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Detective Story

The MYSTERIOUS WEB

Feature Story out January 1st, "Under the Hypnotic Spell." Read It.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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The Mysterious Web

A DETECTIVE STORY BASED ON THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE

By ARMSTRONG PERRY

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT THE TIDE BROUGHT IN

"I'VE often wondered about this detective business," said Tom Greeley. "You fellows seem to have more'n the five senses that the Lord gave to the rest of us humans."

Mace Turner slowly finished his bowl of chowder before he replied. Mace never seemed in a hurry, especially on those occasions when he pulled out to Dolphin Island to spend a day or two with Greeley.

"Well," he said at last, "maybe detectives do have a sixth sense, but I reckon their success depends more on the use of the five senses that other folks have. Ever hear of mental telepathy?"

"Somethin' like wireless, ain't it?" inquired Tom.

"The only resemblance between mental telepathy and wireless telegraphy," explained Turner, "is that the communication takes place without wires. Wireless telegraphy requires complicated and expensive machinery for both the sending and the receiving of messages, whereas mental telepathy is as quick and as free as thought itself."

"But," said Tom, "you don't mean to say that folks can really exchange messages by just thinkin' them to one another?"

"I don't say that all people can, but it cannot be denied that there are instances, many of them, in which all the evidence seems to show that such is the case," said Turner. "Mothers have often asserted that they have known when their children were in danger, and some of them have even said that they have warned their offspring by mental messages and saved them from peril. Between some husbands and wives there seems to be the same kind of thought communication, and even between strangers I believe it is a possibility."

Tom studied the calm face of the detective keenly before he went deeper into the subject. He had known Mace Turner for three years. The detective had rowed out to the island often. His first visit came about through the search for a clue that Greeley fortunately had been able to give him, and since then the two men had become good friends and had been associated in many an adventure. In fact, they were such close friends that Turner not infrequently took advantage of the fisherman's credulity and good nature by perpetrating sundry practical jokes. Greeley therefore was on his guard when any new subject was introduced, and tried to make sure that Turner was in earnest before letting himself be led into a hoax.

Evidently the detective was quite serious about the wonders of mental telepathy.

"I don't see how you can tell," declared Greeley. "Suppose two folks do happen to think of the same thing at the same time. There's nothin' wonderful about that. Folks have got to think about somethin', and there ain't so much to think about but what two of 'em might hit on the same thing at once."

"But," argued the detective, "suppose it seems clear that whatever they think about is due to some unexpected and unforeseen occurrence; suppose it appears certain that the mental message shot from the brain of one to the brain of the other is an expression of their mutual interest in the matter; suppose, for example, that a friend of the man whose corpse is floating out yonder——"

"What!" exclaimed Greeley, snatching up a glass. "How do you know that thing is a corpse?"

Mace kept his keen eyes imperturbably on the gray object that the tide was bearing slowly along.

"As I said before, a detective's success depends more upon the use of his five senses than upon anything more occult," he said. "There's nothing else that floats on the water just like a dead body."

Greeley put on his hat and started for the door. "We've got to get that," he asserted. "There's a reward of five dollars for picking up a body."

Turner smiled. "Anybody would think you were the most avaricious cuss in the world, Tom, to hear you talk."

"Well," replied Greeley, "you can't bring a drowned man back to life, so there ain't much use looking at a rescue of this sort from a philanthropic point of view, as they say in the lectures at the Seaman's Home. Of course, maybe you can relieve his friends' minds by lettin' 'em know that he's dead instead of just missin', but your takin' the five from the city for picking him up don't hinder that none. I'll just be lowerin' the boat."

"You will not need to lower the boat," interposed the detective. "If you'll just be patient, the gentleman will soon be at your door."

"Sure enough!" assented Tom. "Anything that comes from that quarter gets stranded on the island sooner or later. But in time, do you know whether it's a man or a woman?"

"Anybody who visits the beaches as often as you do ought to know by this time that the ladies don't usually have their hair cut short or wear one-piece bathing-suits," chided Turner.

Again Greeley took the glass and looked long at the floating object. "Right again," he admitted.

Together they waited outside on the rocks while the gruesome thing in the water came nearer and nearer. As it hung for a moment on some submerged obstruction within reach, Tom tied a bow-line in the end of a rope and slipped it over the limp arms and head. They tried to pull the body up on a rock, but it had been in the water so long that this was found to be impracticable. If there had been a sandy beach they could have rolled it ashore; but the steep, slippery incline made their foothold too insecure for lifting it.

"I'll have to make an examination in the water," remarked Turner. Going into the cabin, he quickly changed to a bathing-suit and, returning, waded into the water to his waist. He made a minute inspection of the corpse before climbing back up the rocks.

"I guess it's mental telepathy or nothing in this case," he muttered. "There isn't a mark on it that could be used for identification. Apparently the bathing-suit was new two weeks ago, but there's not even a manufacturer's name on it. I'll have to ask you to take care of the body while I go ashore and report."

"Must be some feller that went in swimmin' and got out beyond his depth," mused Greeley.

"There's a small knife-wound under his left shoulder-blade," said Turner.

"Is that so? Must have been murdered, then."

"I'm afraid he was," affirmed the detective. "But it seems doubtful that we shall ever know who did it. I keep a rather close watch on the lists of missing persons hereabouts, and I don't recall any description that tallies with this case. Something tells me, though, that I am going to be invited to unravel the mystery, if possible."

"If they ask you to, you will do it," said Greeley confidently.

The officer looked appreciatively at the brawny form of the fisherman. "Tom, there's nothing in the world that gives a man confidence in himself like the confidence of his friends. If I have to investigate this case I want you to promise that you will help me."

"Help you? Why, I wouldn't be no good as a detective's assistant."

Mace smiled indulgently. "If all men were as modest concerning their ability as you are, there never would be any cause for jealousy in the world. The fact is that in a case of this kind I would depend as much upon your common sense and your knowledge of the sea as upon my own detective ability. Will you begin by taking care of the body until I return?"

"Sure I will," promised Greeley as Turner pulled in his skiff from its position under the lea of the island and jumped in.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DETECTIVE CONFRONTS A MYSTERY

IT was a mile to the mainland. The sea was calm, and although he had to cross the tide, Turner made good time. As he pulled steadily along, he pondered over the strange case that chance had brought to him while he had been seeking rest and relaxation on Dolphin Island.

The condition of the body indicated that it had been in the water at least two weeks, possibly a little longer. There were no tattoo-marks, no marks on the bathing-suit, no striking peculiarities of any kind. The man apparently was about thirty years of age. Allowing for the bloating effect of the water, he estimated his weight in life at about one hundred and forty-five pounds. His height, roughly measured by spanning with the hand, was five feet and eight inches.

The faded eyes, staring blankly upward as the body had been turned over, seemed to have been blue. The hair was of the blond color characteristic of the Swede. The face, too, distorted though it was, indicated Scandinavian origin or descent. The hands were strong, but not distinctively those of a mechanic, lacking the heavy callouses caused by hard and continuous labor, yet they gave evidence of having been not unaccustomed to toil.

Turner stopped his rowing for a few minutes and let the boat drift, watching landmarks on shore for aid in estimating the flow of the tide.

"If the body has been in the water two weeks," he thought, "it has drifted back and forth at least twenty-eight times, since the tide rises and falls twice a day. Apparently the water moves at the rate of about four miles an hour just now. Sometimes it's swifter and sometimes slower. It might be safe to say that from dead low tide to high tide a floating object would cover a distance of not more than twenty miles. Within that distance of this point, north and south, there are eight bathing beaches that have public bath-houses; besides these, there are private bathing-places innumerable. Then there are hundreds of pleasure boats, from any one of which a man might plunge.

"Within the last month have been reported three persons who might have been drowned in Massaquoit Bay, and none of these has been found; but not one of them seems to have resembled this body. The man might have been thrown overboard from any one of a hundred steam or sailing craft, inward or outward bound, although that seems less probable on account of his being in a bathing-suit."

He picked up the oars again and began rowing. After a few strokes he stopped and listened intently as if he had heard some unusual sound. "It's strange," he said to himself, "that I should so often have the impression of somebody trying to talk to me. This mental telepathy that I've been talking to Greeley about is only a rare phenomena at most. This must be my imagination. Maybe I ate too much chowder."

Pulling on, he reached the landing and went up through the boat-yard.

"Hello, Green," he called to the proprietor, "have you heard of anybody dropping out of sight lately?"

"Why, yes," answered Green; "I read in the papers the other day about an old man going fishing and not coming back. They found his boat anchored and his lines all set just as he left them, but not a hide nor hair of him."

"Yes, I know of that case," said Turner. "Are there any others?"

"That's all I know of; at least, the only case that looks like a drowning accident. Why, are you looking for some one?"

"Greeley and I just picked up a corpse," the officer explained, "that came ashore out on the island. It doesn't answer to the description of the old man who left his boat in the bay. This is a younger man, with light hair and blue eyes. If you hear of anything, let me know."

"All right," assented Green.

Turner went to a telephone-booth, called up the inspector, and made a brief report of the case. "Investigate," said the inspector.

Then Turner communicated with the bath-houses at the various beaches one after another, but at none of them had any report been received of a lost swimmer. From none of the private residences along the shore could he obtain any clue to the identity of the dead man. None of the boat-yards, where small boats were kept to let, had lost one, and in no instance had a customer failed to return, aside from the elderly gentleman whom Green had mentioned. He notified the coroner of his discovery and left the booth.

Not to be satisfied until he had made an exhaustive search for information, the detective went to a garage, hired an automobile and drove down the shore of the bay for thirty miles, making frequent stops and inquiries. Crossing by a ferry, he rode back up the other shore, thus covering practically the whole waterfront for sixty miles.

It was dark when he returned to the garage. He went to a hotel, ate supper, and retired to his room. It annoyed him to be unable to turn up a clue of any kind. Men do not drop out of the world without leaving traces. When a man dies from a knife-wound in the back it logically follows that somebody else must have inflicted the wound. Furthermore, a man in a bathing-suit must have other clothing somewhere, presumably in a bath-house.

Late into the night he pondered the mystery. As he turned off the light and was about to get into bed there came again that curious sense of being addressed by some person far away, through the agency of mental telepathy.

"Who is it?" he asked mentally, shaping the words with his lips without uttering a sound.

With startling distinctness the answer came, not as spoken words but rather as a thought from the mind of another person—"I need you, Mace Turner. You are the only man in the world who can help me."

He hesitated a moment, then with a silent laugh jumped into bed. "This is all nonsense," he thought.

Nevertheless, even in his dreams the strange voice kept calling, "Mace, I need you." Again and again it half-wakened him, but each time he endeavored to throw off the impression and continue his slumber.

He awoke with the same strong sense of having been addressed by some person far distant and in deep distress. "Well, I suppose I can go over the boats," he said to himself grudgingly.

Eating a simple breakfast in the dining-room, he went down to Green's boat-yard and engaged a launch. "Give me a fast one, and a good man to run it. I have a big day's work ahead of me," he said.

"Haven't heard anything about your dead man," volunteered Green.

"Neither have I," Turner replied, "but before I give up the case I am going to visit every boat in the bay."

It was Saturday, and many of the week-end vacationists were at work on their boats, early as it was. From yacht to yacht his speedy launch darted, and he created everywhere a strong interest in the mystery of the dead man at Dolphin Island, although nobody could give him any information of value.

It seemed remarkable that the corpse had been seen from none of the hundreds of boats, as it must have been floating for days in their vicinity.

"We might run out to Deep Channel Light," suggested the skipper of the launch. "The keeper out there is a friend of mine, and I am sure he will be glad to help if he can."

Turner gazed toward the horizon, where the lighthouse reared its white shaft. "How far is it?" he questioned.

"Nine miles," replied the skipper.

"Well, let's make a good job of this while we're in it," decided the detective. "It's a clear run. I'll take the wheel and give you a rest."

The keeper of the light was as much interested and as ignorant of the matter as all the other people Mace had interviewed. "He couldn't have come from outside the bay, unless he was brought. But if he's been floating around inside all this time, why in Tophet ain't somebody run across him afore now?"

"It beats me," admitted Turner. "I guess I'll have to tell the inspector that this is a case without a clue."

After accepting the lightkeeper's invitation to "have a bite," contributing a parcel of luncheon brought from the hotel to vary the lighthouse fare, Turner turned the prow of the launch westward and ordered the engine started.

The boat had gone scarcely two miles when the power "went dead." Before the trouble could be remedied, a stiff breeze sprang up from the southeast. The tossing of the boat delayed repairs to the engine, and it was dark before the men were again under way.

"Suppose we run in under the lea of Dolphin Island," the officer suggested. "It would be nasty work trying to find our way into the boat-yard through the shallow channel and all the boats at their moorings, and I haven't a doubt that Greeley is anxiously waiting for me to return and relieve him of the care of that corpse."

Dolphin Island has a limited area, not more than two-and-a-half acres. The launch slid in under the lea, and Turner stepped to the bow to drop the anchor. As the engine stopped, he heard loud oaths floating down the wind from the other end of the island, where the body lay.

Making the power-boat secure for the night, the men stepped into the tender, rowed to a favorable spot among the rocks, landed and pulled the skiff up high and dry. Then, picking their way along the shore, they continued hearing the dreadful imprecations of a man in the last stages of exasperation.

The detective was at a loss to understand the trouble. It seemed like a one-sided quarrel, with only one voice audible. As he drew nearer he could discern the figure of Greeley, dimly outlined in the darkness, lunging vigorously at something in the water with a long pole, at short intervals.

Having observed cautiously that the fisherman apparently was alone, Turner shouted to him, "Hello, Greeley! What's the matter?"

"Matter enough when a feller leaves his pal with a dead man what ought to have sense enough to stay in the water peaceable but wants to climb out on land every minute. If he was a decent, respectable cadaver, and it was a pos-

sible thing to make him comfortable up here with me, I'd do it. But, Lordy!" Holding his nose with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, he kept the end of the pole against the body with the other hand in a diligent effort to prevent the surging waves from tossing it at his doorstep.

"Hasn't the coroner been here?" inquired Turner.

"Coroner?" Greeley growled. "Of course not! That lubber never was known to get around inside of a week when he was needed. Now I'll have to stay up all night with this thing."

"Can't we tow it around to the lea side?"

"Well, if you'll take my place and stand a short watch here," responded Greeley, "I'll sure make a try for it."

CHAPTER THREE

THE INSPECTOR INSISTS

AFTER supper the detective rowed over to the mainland, the wind and sea having gone down, and reported to the inspector that there was absolutely no clue to be found bearing upon the case. He went over in detail his efforts to gather information concerning the man whose body had so unaccountably drifted in on the tide, and expressed his opinion that it would be useless to continue the investigation further. In the course of time, he argued, some report might be received at headquarters that would lead to the identification of the corpse. Photographs could be made and an accurate record preserved.

The inspector was unwilling to accept the detective's view of the matter. He argued that the reputation of the bureau depended upon the solution of problems submitted to it, and the more difficult the case the greater his inclination toward pursuit of investigation until a definite conclusion could be reached.

At last Turner suggested going to the office, as they were unable to come to any agreement by telephone.

The railway coach in which the detective took his seat was nearly empty. Tired from his exertions, he leaned his head against the plush-covered back of his seat and closed his eyes. The roar and rumble of the train gradually faded away and he fell asleep.

Suddenly he came to himself and sat bolt upright. Again that mysterious voice had called him. It seemed to have spoken disapprovingly of his desire to abandon the case. He had but lightly considered these impressions that had come to him from time to time since he first sighted the corpse of the murdered man; but with their insistent return he began wondering if, after all, there might be a reality in what seemed to be but a vagary of the imagination. Again he closed his eyes and tried placing himself in a receptive mood. He thought over all the known circumstances surrounding the case, and mentally asked for light on the matter.

Presently the voice or thought came again, but this time accompanied by another and a discordant influence. If it had been a voice this new presence would have sounded a note of fear and hatred. The effect of the two opposing elements was startling.

From the station Turner hurried to the inspector's office. "Are you still of the same opinion?" queried that officer.

"I have thoroughly searched every foot of the shore and every boat in the harbor," said the sleuth. "I have talked with scores of people, but have not found any one who ever saw this man, dead or alive, to their knowledge. There has been no report from any source of the disappearance of a man answering his description. I believe in thoroughness, and I am willing to follow your instruction, but for the life of me I can't see what is to be gained by continuing what seems likely to be a fruitless investigation."

"Are you sure there is no other element in the case?" asked the inspector, regarding him with a curious air.

Turner hesitated. "I don't want you to think me visionary, and that's why I have not mentioned one detail to which I can't attach very much weight."

"What is it?" demanded the inspector sharply.

"It is simply a feeling that some one who could give us the information we need is thinking of us in connection with the case. In fact, I might say that I seem to hear voices at times urging me to go on until I have solved the mystery."

"Have you studied mental telepathy?" the inspector inquired.

"I have never made a serious study of the subject, but I have read some of the literature relating to it."

The inspector took a volume from a bookcase. Turning a few pages, he read:

"Telepathy, or thought transference, is the conveyance of thoughts and feelings from mind to mind by other than the ordinary channels of sense—sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

"The word 'telepathy' was first suggested by F. W. H. Myers in 1882, but the suggestion had long before been made that the transmission of ideas, images and sensations could be brought about by other than the apparatus of the body normally used in receiving impressions.

"Some writers have explained the seeing of wraiths or apparitions by the theory of 'brain waves.'

"Systematic experiments in thought transference have been made—sometimes with marked success, sometimes with no results of an evidential nature.

"The Society for Psychical Research collected first-hand records of cases in which persons at the moment of death, or within twelve hours of death, appeared to friends or relatives or other persons at a distance. No such records were considered as evidential by the society unless they were put into writing within three years after the event, or were based on notes made at the time.

"The second systematic attempt to collect material was the census of hallucinations, initiated at the Congress of Experimental Psychology of 1889. The total number of persons who made returns was 17,000, of whom 1,684 asserted that they had once or oftener experienced an hallucination. Analyses of the answers showed that in 350 cases the apparition was recognized. The probability that any person will die on a given day is roughly 1 in 19,000; if, therefore, chance alone operated, one apparition in 19,000 would coincide with a death. After making all allowances for error, the committee found that 30 of the 350 recognized apparitions came at the time of death. The cases which appeared to be due to telepathy were therefore 440 times more numerous than could be ascribed to chance.

"Direct transference of thoughts, images or sensations by an act of the will has been attempted. Persons have been hypnotized by others at a distance. Dreams sometimes appear to be caused by telepathic communication.

"A singularly interesting instance of telepathy is recorded by Wesermann, who tried the experiment in the early part of the nineteenth century. He wished to make the phantasm of a lady appear to a lieutenant, who was residing some miles away. At the time of the experiment he was not alone, owing to an unforeseen visit. His visitor is said to have seen the apparition also.

"The so-called reciprocal cases are of much importance as evidence. Two persons appear to receive a telepathic impulse from each other. Each receives information about the other, or sees his phantasm.

"Various theories have been put forward to account for telepathy. Undulations starting from nervous centers are adopted as an explanation by some. According to all physical laws, the strength of the telepathic impulse should vary with the distance over which it is exerted, but it does not seem to show such variation.

"Telepathy is often referred to as an explanation of the powers of spiritualistic mediums, but it seems insufficient to explain them unless we assume for the medium a far greater power of reading other people's minds than experimental evidence has so far shown to exist."

"Do you believe that?" the inspector interrogated.

"I might believe it," conceded Turner, "if there were

other substantial testimony shown to me that it is actually possible."

The inspector looked away thoughtfully for a moment and then his eyes came back to Turner's. "Tell me just what these voices, or whatever they are, seem to be saying," he suggested.

"As nearly as I can describe my impressions," the officer began, "it seemed as if a voice, evidently that of a person in distress, said to me, 'Mace, we need you.' It was not like the recollection of the voice of any person I have known. In fact, if I actually had heard the voice I should say it belonged to somebody I never met. When I heard it the last time, it was interrupted by another voice that seemed antagonistic, angry, fearful. I could not distinguish what this other voice was saying, and really it was more like a mere impression than the utterance of words."

"It seems to me," said the inspector, "that it is our plain duty to go on with this case, no matter where it leads us. If you need corroborative evidence that mental telepathy is an established fact, let me tell you that the same voices or influences you described have come to me also. Go to it, old man! Keep in touch with me if you can, but keep on the trail, at any rate."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF A RED BATHING-CAP

DAWN was breaking as Turner again took up his oars at Green's boat-house to row back to the island. The sea was quite calm, and he felt sure that Greeley and the motor-boat skipper would be in bed, resting from the labors of the previous day. The fresh morning air was stimulating, and he pulled with a steady, powerful swing.

The detective was a man who could be happy in solitude. He loved the open sea, the woods, all the beautiful and interesting things in nature. He found nothing more exhilarating than a tramp through the country or a trip on the water, with his own muscles providing the motive power.

Forgetting the perplexing mystery for a moment, he watched the gulls circling above the water in search of breakfast, the porpoises rolling their way in from the ocean on the same mission, and odds and ends of flotsam and débris borne on the tide. A sand shark crossed his bow, ploughing along with a piece of dorsal fin showing above the surface. The crimson of the dawn gave way to the radiance of the rising sun. Turner, unable to restrain his bubbling spirits, let out his robust baritone in song.

Suddenly he became aware of the fact that his was not the only voice carrying the melody of the well-known ditty of the period that had emerged spontaneously from his subconscious mind. He was keeping his course by watching marks astern, and seldom glanced over his shoulder, knowing that he was headed straight for the island. From somewhere ahead of the boat, but behind him as he sat at the oars, came the sound of a light soprano wafted over the water by the gentle zephyrs.

Startled though he was, Mace did not stop singing. He felt that to do so would be also to silence the other voice, which he desired to locate definitely; so he pulled along steadily and sang lustily, furtively awaiting an opportunity to steal a glance over his shoulder when near enough to the unknown songstress to see her distinctly.

Presently he found himself gaining on the voice, and with it he could hear the slight splash of oars or arms. By a sidewise glance he saw off his starboard bow a red bathing-cap. Beneath the cap, working with machine-like rhythm and precision, were two of the prettiest arms he had ever seen. Without the appearance of haste, he put more force into his strokes and gradually came up abreast of the fair swimmer, who still was humming a delicate accompaniment to his refrain.

Turner was not a vain man, but he had enough confidence in his broad shoulders, glossy black hair, gray eyes and regular features to regard the weaker sex without embarrassment. He waited some time for the aquatic young person to turn her face toward him, and when at last she did so he straightened up with an instinctive attempt to appear at his best.

The girl in the water had none of that water-soaked appearance which mars the attractiveness of the average feminine beach bather. Her perfect-fitting, red-trimmed bathing-suit was no more brilliant than her rosy cheeks. The clear, green water concealed none of her graceful lines. Every movement was as easy and effortless as the sinuous action of a seal.

The detective rowed and sang without showing a sign of having noticed his charming companion, being careful not to pull away from her as she swam along and sang like a beautiful, musical mermaid.

At first Turner had wondered why this girl had undertaken such a long swim alone at that early hour. It must be, he concluded, that she was as fond of the open sea and its solitude as he. The ease and freedom with which she swam indicated the absence of any sense of danger. She was frolicking in the sea much as a child might play in the tall grass of the fields, happy and care-free.

The song completed, the detective steered his boat so as to pass between her and the shore of the island. She swam straight onward, and upon finding the boat blocking her course, she dove beneath it and came up on the other side. Again he changed direction so as to run on ahead of her, but again she slipped past him. Now and then she shot a roguish glance at his face, which showed frankly his man-like admiration.

As they neared the island the detective made up his mind to speak to the girl. He wondered what he should say. Brave though he was in the face of danger, he felt timid and hesitant in the presence of this adorable Naiad.

Just as he opened his mouth to say something, hardly knowing what it would be, the swimmer threw up her hands with an expression of horror, turned quickly, and made off toward the mainland at full speed, as if pursued by some terrifying creature. Thinking of the shark, Turner looked around to see if it were somewhere ahead of the boat. He saw at once that what had frightened the girl was the dead body floating at the end of its tether.

Turning the boat around, he sped after the fleeing nymph. "Please do not be alarmed," he called, but she did not lessen her efforts. It was no difficult matter to keep pace with her, but he dared not to approach her closely, being fearful of striking her with the prow of his boat or an oar. He passed in front of her repeatedly, but each time she eluded him by diving under the skiff.

All the way back to the mainland Turner tried by all means to gain the young woman's confidence and impede her flight, but the greater his effort to stop her the more frantic her attempt at escape. She headed toward one of the public bathing beaches. A hundred yards from shore he made a final effort. Swinging the boat about sharply, so as to block her passage, he reached out his hands appealingly. He caught one horrified glance as she lowered her head and slipped below the surface. He turned toward the other side of the skiff to watch for her reappearance.

Second after second elapsed, but she did not rise. Once or twice he thought there was a slight disturbance in the water, such as might have been caused by a person swimming far below. Here and there a bubble came shimmering up from the depths, lingered for an instant and burst into spray.

Turner became agitated. He knew that no human being could remain under water more than a minute or two at the most without drowning. It was horrible to think that she might have been seized by a cramp or had struck a piece of submerged driftwood and was dying down there in the impenetrable shadows, unseen and beyond reach. Frantically he began rowing about in widening circles. No trace of the girl could be found. He looked up and down the shore, but the only person within sight was a solitary clam-digger more than half a mile away. He scanned the water intently for a few moments, wondering what to do next. She had been so beautiful, so full of vigor, that he could not believe her life had been snuffed out so cruelly:

yet, he knew that she must have died, since she had not come to the surface after her dive.

The solitude became intolerable. Seizing the oars, he rowed back swiftly toward the island. He would obtain Greeley's help and the skipper's in a thorough search for the girl's body.

The skiff touched the rocky shore, and he clambered out, pulling it up over the slippery seaweed. Before going to the fisherman's house he went around to note the position of the corpse. It was still floating on the water, held by the line that Greeley had attached to it.

Turner felt an uncanny sensation of dread as he thought of his fruitless effort at discovering the identity of that almost shapeless lump of human clay, and of that other mysterious person, whose disappearance he had just witnessed.

He sat down to think, and into his thoughts came again that strange influence, almost translatable into words.

The detective steered his boat so as to pass between her and the shore of the island.

This time it conveyed the idea—"Mace, I have seen you, and you will help me." The meaning was so plain and came to him so much like an actual vocal utterance that he surveyed the water as if half expecting a glimpse of the girl with the red cap again, but there was nothing more on the surface than the usual drifting miscellany, with here and there a gull resting on a stick of timber. Again the gentle voice, really inaudible and yet understandable, was interrupted by a harsh and discordant one seemingly bent upon counteracting and nullifying its influence.

Turner laved his face and neck with the cool water, drew himself together, and went up to the cabin of his friend the fisherman. He found Greeley starting a fire and getting things ready for breakfast. The motor-boat skipper was still in his bunk. The detective was about to tell Tom of the mystifying disappearance of the red bathing-cap, when he felt on his lips a slight pressure, as of a fairy finger placed there to prevent the utterance of the words. This time there was no painful suggestion. It was as if the maiden had playfully clapped a hand over his mouth to suppress the telling of a secret. The detective looked at Greeley in the expectation of a salutation or pert remark, but that individual kept placidly on with his work as if the detective had been abed all night and had just risen. He had known Turner too long to wonder at anything his friend might do of an unusual nature.

Mace went outside and filled his lungs with the crisp, salt air. He had lost entirely the feeling that he had been a witness to a tragedy, although the known facts in the case had not changed one iota. Going back indoors, he addressed Greeley with the question, "Who is the girl in the red-trimmed bathing-suit and red cap that goes in swimming early in the morning from over there?"

Tom dropped the griddle of flapjacks that he was shifting to a warmer stove-lid. His face, as he stooped to pick it up, was redder than either the heat or his exertion could have made it.

"Aha-ha!" ejaculated Mace. "I didn't know there was any romance mixed up with your solitary life on Dolphin Island."

Greeley fussed about the stove, poking his driftwood fire, cleaning the griddle and pouring out another trio of cakes.

"What's her name?" insisted Turner.

"Her name?" stammered Tom. "Why—why—that's Hilda."

"Hilda? And who may Hilda be?"

"Why—she—she's just Hilda, that's all."

"Quite fond of swimming, is she?"

"Some swimmer," assented Greeley.

"Does she visit the island often?"

"Well, not what you could really call visitin'. Never put her foot on it, far as I know."

"Then I don't see why you should get so fussed up about it. You've been a sailor all your life, and they say a sailor has a wife in every port."

"'Tain't so; 'tain't so! They's some ports we don't never stop at. When we quit and take to offshore fishin', well——"

"I think I understand," said Turner, nodding slowly. "Is this Hilda in the habit of disappearing suddenly and mysteriously?"

"She don't seem to be in the habit of doin' nothin' else," declared Tom.

"She must be a mermaid. Can't you catch her?"

"Not with a hand-line; I've tried it. I've been thinkin' of usin' a seine."

CHAPTER FIVE

CAN ONE MYSTERY EXPLAIN ANOTHER?

OVER the flapjacks and coffee Turner tactfully drew out not only Greeley but the skipper of the launch as well.

Greeley's embarrassment at the mention of Hilda led him to wonder if the fisherman knew more about her than he had yet admitted. His story, told with great hesitation, was to the effect that this beautiful girl often came swimming across the bay to the island, and always alone; that she never stopped longer than to rest a toe for an instant on a submerged rock, with only her nose out of the water, then went shooting back toward the mainland until her red cap faded away in the distance. Greeley had

admitted having tried intercepting her, as Turner had done, but without any better success. Whenever the boat crossed her course, she simply dived under it and came up laughing, out of reach.

Occasionally the girl had remained out of his sight so long that the old sailor felt sure that she had drowned, but always she had reappeared sooner or later. Sometimes it seemed probable that she had clung to the bottom of his boat, just out of sight from the rowing-seat. At other times she would come up beside some piece of wreckage, large enough to conceal her, as she floated on her back with only her nose above water, and he had so found her once or twice. Then there were numerous yachts moored in the bay, and there was always the possibility of her losing herself behind one of them. Apparently she took delight in these sudden disappearances. She never spoke to him.

"Do you know her?" Mace asked the skipper.

"I've seen her. She swims with the crowd at Crescent Beach. A mighty good swimmer she is, too. She can distance any man I've seen in the bay, anywhere. She has all the strokes, and she dives like a porpoise. Everybody calls her Hilda, but nobody seems to know her other name, or who she is or where she comes from."

"She was scared blue when she caught sight of our silent friend at the end of the line out yonder," remarked Turner.

Greeley bristled up. "If that fool of a coroner don't get that thing away from here there's goin' to be trouble. I ain't goin' to have anything like that around my island scarin' folks away."

The detective laughed.

"I'll get after him to-day," he assured Tom. "I want an autopsy. I can't imagine what good it will do us, but possibly we can find a clue of some sort inside."

The detective went over to the boat-yard in the launch and called up the coroner, who said he would need the police-boat in going after the body. Turner met him at the pier and returned to the island with the uniformed squad.

It was a difficult matter to take the corpse aboard. This was finally accomplished by passing a piece of sailcloth under it and hoisting it on the boom. As soon as it was deposited on deck, the police launch started back toward the city.

A yell from Greeley took Turner on a run astern. The fisherman was gesticulating savagely at the boat. Mace made a trumpet of his hands and shouted, "What's up?"

"You've got my rope," bellowed Tom.

Turner remembered that Greeley had taken a coil of new manila line to lasso the body when first it drifted in at the island. This line had remained attached to it, and the bow-line still encircled the clammy form.

"I'll bring it back," responded the detective, but he was then too far away to make himself heard. As the distance widened between the island and the launch, he could see Tom shaking his fist and turning angrily toward the door of his humble dwelling-place.

"What's your friend so excited about?" inquired the coroner.

"His rope. We've gone off with his Sunday-go-to-meeting line."

"So we have, but I'll see that he gets it again," laughed the coroner.

"He won't be happy until he does."

At the morgue the detective supervised the autopsy, watching the operation closely. He said nothing about the wound in the back until he saw that the surgeon had overlooked it. Such official dignitaries have too many cases demanding their attention to be overscrupulous over small details.

"You didn't notice this slit under the shoulder-blade, did you, doc?" interrogated Turner.

The coroner took a magnifying-glass and focussed it upon the spot pointed out to him.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "That is a cut, sure enough. I was about to pronounce this a case of drowning, but I guess there's more to it."

"I suggest that you go to the bottom of this," advised the detective.

The surgeon found the cut to be deep, and evidently made with a small, keen knife-blade. The detective insisted upon a minute examination, and the coroner obligingly dissected away the tissues.

In one of the ribs a small bit of steel was found imbedded. The doctor removed it carefully and laid it upon the marble slab. Turner seized it eagerly. "Now we have something," he ejaculated.

"It's mighty little," laughed the coroner.

"More important than you think, doc. Until now I haven't been able to pick up a single tangible clue that by any apparent possibility could connect this man with the person who caused his death, if he actually was murdered as indicated by this cut in the back, but this knife-point will be indisputable evidence, if we can find the man who held the knife from which this piece was broken when the crime was committed."

"Small chance of that, Turner. You take it for granted that a man did the trick, I see."

Into the detective's mind instantly flashed an awful possibility. Could his mermaid be connected with this case in any way? Was there any logical association of this foul murder with her mysterious, solitary journeying in the bay?

The officer gazed away thoughtfully and turned his eyes toward a dark corner of the operating-room. In the shadow suddenly appeared a face, which for an instant regarded him sorrowfully with large brown eyes, as if in reproach, only to be thrust aside by a powerful, brutal hand.

With a start the detective recovered himself, ashamed of the preposterous suspicion that had entered his mind. The coroner was disinfecting his instruments, and the

other participants in the autopsy were speculating on the possibility of a solution of the mystery.

From the morgue Turner took a car to Crescent Beach. The afternoon crowd was gathering, and the number of swimmers was rapidly being augmented as each arriving load pushed itself into the bath-houses and out again into the surf. He hired a suit at one of these places and crowded himself into it behind the door of one of the tiny cells. He noted carefully the character of the bathing-suits handed out to patrons and hanging on the lines outside, but none of them resembled in pattern or color the one that the dead man wore. If this man had begun his last swim at this beach he must have brought his own suit or obtained one elsewhere.

The water was fine, and Turner enjoyed his plunge keenly. He kept a sharp lookout for Hilda, and was not disappointed. She came tripping down the sands presently in the familiar red-trimmed suit and cap, immediately becoming the center of attraction.

Mounting the diving-platform on the swimming-float, the girl made a flying leap into the brine. Turner watched for her reappearance. A minute passed, but she did not

come to the surface. He glanced about at the many admiring faces. Evidently her tactics were well known to frequenters of the beach. There were some expressions of anxiety, but most of the bathers seemed to be merely waiting with idle curiosity to see her bob up in some unexpected quarter and display her customary aquatic tricks.

Turner never could be satisfied without a plausible explanation of any uncommon occurrence that he might happen to witness. Quickly he turned over in his mind all of the various possibilities in this instance. The girl might be clinging to a rock under water, or she might be hiding behind one of the boats at anchor. Then a new idea struck him, and he dived, coming up underneath the swimming-float, among the oil barrels used to give it buoyancy. Cautiously he pulled himself about with his hands. Turning around one end of a half-submerged barrel, he became aware of the presence of the elusive being he had been so desirous of meeting. He could not see her, but he could catch the slight sound of her breathing. The motion of the water brought them together. There was a sharp exclamation of surprise, a splash, and then nothing but the lapping of wavelets against the supports of the platform.

The detective dived out from underneath the raft, came up into the sunlight and looked about quickly. The red cap was nowhere in sight. He remained in the water for a half-hour or more, but without again catching a glimpse of the mysterious girl.

At last he emerged, returned to his room, dressed, and went for a stroll along the beach, searching his mind for some logical connection between the two mysteries. A merry laugh sounded behind him, and he quickly faced about. So far as the eye could reach, the white sand stretched away in either direction. The dunes that dotted the shore were more than a hundred yards from the edge of the water where he was walking. Neither toward the east and the open sea nor westward in the direction of the bath-houses nor near the sand dunes at the south was there any living creature to be seen. He was as much alone as if he had stood in the middle of the Sahara Desert.

CHAPTER SIX

MORE HASTE, LESS SPEED

MACE TURNER hurried back to the bath-house. By this time he thought Hilda would be leaving for home.

He found that he had been gone longer than he thought. The proprietor of the bath-house was putting up the shutters and preparing to close for the night.

"Have all of your patrons gone?" asked the detective.

"Yah," replied the man.

"The girl in the red bathing-cap—which way did she go?"

"The girl mit the red bathing-cap?" asked the man stupidly. "Many girls vear red bathing-caps."

"You know the one I mean—Hilda, the mysterious one."

"Oh, Hilda," said the man. "I don't know vhich vay she vent. Maybe by the car, maybe by the boat."

"How does she generally go?"

"I don't know, I have so many customers. I have no time to follow them und see where they go."

"Are you quite sure she has gone?"

"Vell, you can look for yourself," said the man with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You come with me," suggested Turner. Together they went through the long corridors, peering into the open doors of the tiny rooms.

"Which room did she occupy?" asked the officer.

"How should I know?" asked the man deprecatingly. 'Ve haf two hundred rooms. How should I know vich key I give to vich customer?"

From the rear of the long, low, wooden building, Turner looked out of a small window across a hundred yards of grass-covered marsh to a railroad station. A long train, bound cityward, had just pulled in and was being rapidly filled with sun-burned, happy folks, talking and laughing over the day's pleasure by the sea.

Suddenly he leaned eagerly forward. Mounting the steps of the last car, he had seen a young woman who looked, as he thought, Hilda might, when dressed for the street. With a word of thanks to the bath-house proprietor, he swung his feet through the narrow window, vaulted to the ground, and raced across the marsh.

Turner was a good runner, but the marsh was not a good race-course. The wet sand retarded him, and in jumping a narrow creek he sank into soft mud above his ankles. Quickly extricating himself, he raced on.

He heard two shrill blasts from the signal whistle in the engineer's cab, and saw the wheels of the engine begin to turn. The train gathered headway, and he strained every nerve and muscle to increase his speed. The last car was passing the crossing as he reached the street which ran beside the station.

The crossing-gate was down and he had to slip under it. This delayed him for an instant. As he straightened up inside the gate, still sprinting, he reached out and just touched the platform railing.

For a second or two he kept pace with it, running like mad down the cinder path beside the ties, then he felt it slip beyond the reach of his fingers. The gap widened and, seeing that his effort was useless, he slowed down.

As he stopped, panting, a willowy figure appeared in the rear door of the car, and a pair of eyebrows, which would have started an artist raving, raised in amused questioning. Turner, red from his exertion, turned a deeper crimson. It is not pleasant to fail in the presence of one whose good opinion you are especially anxious to win.

The detective was not the man to give up easily anything which he had undertaken to do. He raised his hand and stopped an automobile which approached the crossing at the moment. "Can you beat that train to the next station?" he asked the chauffeur.

"This car is not for hire," replied the driver.

"In this case it's got to be," insisted Turner, irritated at the slightest sign of delay.

"Is that so?" retorted the man. "Hop in."

"That's all right—be a sport," said the officer, jumping in. "I've got to catch that train, and I'm willing to pay for it. It won't delay you more than fifteen minutes—you know these beach trains stop at every crossing."

"What's the game?" asked the chauffeur, opening the throttle and swinging around the corner into the road which paralleled the track.

"I'm trying to find out who killed a man whose body came ashore at Dolphin Island," replied the officer.

The chauffeur cast a quick sidewise glance at the detective to see if he was in earnest. "That wasn't a dead one you were chasing just as I came down the street," he said with a grin.

"It was just as big a mystery," declared Turner. "Do you happen to know this Hilda, the girl of the red bathing-cap that everybody on the beach is talking about?"

The chauffeur did not reply for a moment. His speedometer was showing better than fifty miles, and he had to keep his attention on the road. Presently he slowed down a little in order to pass a bad spot safely, and he found time to say "Yes, I know Hilda—that is, I know her as everybody else does. She's a dream, all right, and likewise a puzzle. Now you see her, now you don't. There she is now on the platform of the train getting ready to alight."

The automobile shot up to the station. Turner slipped the chauffeur a five-dollar bill. The man demurred at accepting so large a fee, but the detective held up his hand and said, "Don't say a word, it's worth it."

He walked around the end of the station, rapidly formulating in his mind the things which he would say to Hilda. The train started as he walked through the crowd, looking for her.

He passed down the whole length of the platform and then came back again with the last of the passengers

who had left the train. He had studied every feminine face, but the one which he sought was not among them.

As he reached the point where the platform joined the street, an amused voice greeted him: "You've got another ride coming if you want it."

It was the chauffeur. He brought the car up to where Turner was standing, and pointed down the track. In the doorway of the last car stood Hilda with the same amused, questioning expression on her face.

Turner flushed and mumbled something between his clenched teeth.

"Get in," said the chauffeur. "If you're going to catch that train again, every second counts.

"I don't know as it's fair to expect to keep this up," he said.

"Oh, that's all right," said the chauffeur. "I'm enjoying the chase. Guess I'm getting more fun out of it than you are."

"Well, I'm not on the job for fun," said Mace, "but I'm going to get to the bottom of this, no matter what happens. Open her up and see if we can't connect with that train again at the next station."

They missed it at the next stop, and the chauffeur sped on, passing one threatening traffic policeman after another. "You'll have to stand back of me if I get pinched," he said to the detective.

"I sure will," Turner assured him.

As they approached the station, which was simply an open shed, they caught sight of Hilda, still standing in the open door of the rear car. "She can't dodge us this time," said Turner.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when there came a loud explosion. The machine swerved, skidded, and brought up against a telegraph-post. Turner was tossed out upon the gravel of the station platform, and rolled nearly to the steps of the rear car of the train.

"O-oh!" It was an exclamation of genuine alarm and anxiety which he heard above him. Scrambling to his feet, he looked into Hilda's face. Her hands were clasped over her heart and for a moment her face was as pale as death. "I hope you're not hurt," she said, and her soft voice left no doubt as to her sincerity.

"No, not at all," said Mace as he brushed his clothes with his cap.

He tried hard to think of other things to say, but with all his trying the words would not come. Whether it was because the accident had shaken him up so severely or whether it was the enchantment of her brown eyes which held him silent and emotionless, he simply stood and gazed as the train got under way and took her from him.

The chauffeur's voice aroused him from his trance. "Say, boss," he ejaculated, "if you don't mind helping me straighten this fender and fix this blow-out, we'll make another try for it. But if you're lookin' for clues, I suggest that you go back to your dead man. You don't seem to be makin' much headway."

CHAPTER SEVEN

A DEAD MAN OR A LIVING GIRL?

THAT night Mace Turner went over the whole history of the case carefully, so far as he knew it.

There was nothing to connect the dead man with the living girl, except the mysterious voices, or rather influences, of which both he and the inspector had been conscious. They came to him again and again during the night. Always when he heard the voice he thought of Hilda, but why he did so was more than he could tell.

Early the next afternoon he went to the beach. In order to save himself from embarrassment in case he should meet her and also that he might have an opportunity to observe her without being observed himself in his true character, he used a disguise.

He rather doubted her coming to the beach. He felt sure that she would not come if she were in any way implicated in the crime and anxious to avoid detection. If she were a criminal she would certainly be a clever one, and a clever criminal would be on the alert and know that a detective was on her trail almost from the moment when they took the case.

If Hilda had any reason for suspicion or fear, she did not show it, for she appeared about four o'clock, as usual. There was no mystery in her appearance. She came on the train, got her key at the office of the bath-house, and presently emerged, clad in her red-trimmed suit and red cap.

Turner, from behind a pair of whiskers, followed her every movement. She swam, dove, played pranks in the water, and did all the little stunts for which she had become so famous.

About half-past five she re-entered the bath-house, and a half-hour later came out and hurried to the train. The detective was close behind her. In the railway coach he studied every expression.

It was difficult for him to maintain the attitude of investigator. As his eye followed the lines of her graceful shoulders and dwelt upon her velvety cheeks and long, drooping lashes, he was subjected to stirrings of the heart, which were connected with a mystery far older and deeper than the one which he was trying to unravel.

He noted that Hilda had a commutation ticket. As the conductor punched it he saw that it was made out to Miss Hornsten. It was good between Crescent Beach and New York.

Mace concluded that she probably lived somewhere between the terminal station and the beach, coming from work to the water and then returning home.

He watched her closely as she looked out of the window at the cozy cottages and gardens along the railroad. Occasionally an expression of anxiety disturbed her tranquillity. She would be looking quietly out of the window, as though she loved the country with its green fields and tall trees, and then suddenly she would cringe slightly, as though attacked by sharp pain.

In her manner there was nothing of the furtiveness of the guilty conscience, although at last when she discovered that the man behind her was watching her so closely she did show some signs of annoyance and displeasure.

Contrary to Turner's expectations, she did not leave the train in the suburbs, but rode through to the terminal. Still following, he passed through the station, crossed on the ferry, made a rumbling journey in a rickety surface car over to the East Side, and alighted in front of a corner building, too good to look at home among its squalid surroundings.

The detective recognized the sign above the door. It was the International Bank.

The great doors were closed, and before them were heavy iron gates. Hilda tried the fastenings and found them secure. Then she went around the corner to a side entrance and took from her purse a key.

At that point there was no place where Turner could conceal himself, so he stood on a corner, rather obviously watching her. Just as she was about to slip the key into the lock, she turned and saw him. Evidently she recognized him as the man who had been sitting behind her in the train.

Although the street seemed deserted except for the two of them, she showed no sign of fear. She was, however, annoyed and did not hesitate to show it. Again her little hand slipped into her purse. This time it came out with a police whistle, which she placed to her lips.

Turner was taken by surprise, although he should not have been. Although he was prepared to identify himself to any police officer, he did not care to do so at that time or place, so he slipped around the corner and disappeared.

Quickly circling the block, he returned to the side door. Inside the plate-glass was a gate of heavy steel bars, which Hilda, as she had entered, had closed behind her.

Electric lights were burning before the vaults, so that the officers of the law might have a plain view of the interior.

Hilda was sitting at a desk, writing. He guessed that it was a personal rather than a business note. When it was finished she glanced over it and placed it in its envelope with a tender little smile.

She appeared to be ready to leave. Turner stepped into a shadow, expecting her to open the door. A minute passed, and she did not appear. He stepped to the door again and looked inside. The chair in which she had been sitting was pushed up to the desk; pens, ink, blotter and stationery had been returned to their proper niches—everything was in its place. He appeared to command a view of the entire office, but Hilda was nowhere in sight. He craned his neck and examined every inch of the space within the range of his vision, and listened for footsteps.

Another minute or two passed, and nothing, not even a shadow, stirred within. Thinking that she might be going out of the front entrance, he turned to go around the corner.

"Not so fast, me bye!" exclaimed a burly voice in his ear, as a heavy hand grasped his collar. "Ye can't get in, and there's no use tryin', but we've a nice lodgin' for ye at the station-house."

The detective was furious. He attempted to explain who he was, but to everything he said the policeman would make but one reply—"Ye can tell that to the judge in the mornin'."

It was not necessary for him to wait until morning and explain matters to his honor, for the lieutenant at the desk promptly recognized his credentials, and with profuse apologies released him from custody. But although he returned to the bank promptly, he could discover nothing.

Returning to the station-house, he inquired of the officers if they knew of the young lady who appeared to be connected with the bank. The nods and winks which they exchanged, and the knowing glances which they sent in his direction were evidence enough that they did.

"What does she do there?" asked Turner.

"Oh, she seems to be a sort of private secretary to the banker," answered the lieutenant.

"Where does she live?" he inquired.

"Sure, and that's just what every bye in the precinct would like to know," replied the officer, "but in spite of all the good chances she has had for protection on the dark nights when she has worked at the office, she always goes home alone."

"Did you see her leave the bank to-night?" asked Turner of the officer who had arrested him.

"I did not," replied the policeman.

"Do you know if she came out of a side door or not? I went around the block in a hurry to avoid being pinched in her presence when she produced her whistle, but I'm sure I got back to the door before she had a chance to get away."

"You're not the only one who has waited at that door," remarked the officer with a grin; "but so far as I know, nobody ever saw her come out. We always do our speaking when she goes in."

"You don't suppose she would remain in this neighborhood all night?" exclaimed Turner.

"I'll be jiggered if I know," said the officer. "We've never had any reason to investigate—except personal reasons—and of course they don't call for any butting-in."

"That's as mysterious as what she does at the beach."

"What's that?" asked the lieutenant.

"Don't you know that she is the belle of Crescent Beach?"

The officers had not heard of her aquatic exploits, and gathered about interestedly as he told them the story. In the midst of it he stopped and looked about sharply. "I didn't know that there was any woman here," he said. "Where is she—in one of the cells?"

"What do you mean?" asked the lieutenant. "There's no woman here."

"I certainly heard some one laugh." Turner stopped suddenly and colored. "This gets me," he added, and turned abruptly with a quick "Good-night, boys; I'll see you again."

Outside the glow of the green lamps, the street on which the station-house stood was dark and gloomy. Mace, baffled and disgruntled, ploughed along with his head down and his cap over his eyes. As he was passing a narrow alleyway he heard the swish of a skirt. He turned quickly. Through the shadows he saw a lithe form and heard a footstep which he thought he recognized. On tiptoe he ran silently but swiftly after it. The alley was short, and in a few seconds he came out into a broad, well-lighted thoroughfare. He thought that he must surely be near her, but looking up and down the street he found there was nobody who resembled her in any way.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOM GREELEY STARTS A BANK ACCOUNT

MACE decided that he was up against either a clever practical joker, or a woman who was his match in playing the detective's game of hide and seek.

It seemed incredible when he thought of her innocent face and charming, child-like ways that she should be connected with so foul a crime as the murder of the man who had drifted ashore at Dolphin Island in any way which would be discreditable to herself. And again, if hers was the voice which haunted his slumbers, she certainly must be innocent, for that voice was always calling for his assistance.

On the other hand, no designing woman could more cleverly lure him on than she was doing. One exclamation, such as she had uttered when he was tossed from the automobile to the station platform, coming from so fair a creature, was enough to cause any man, if he was susceptible in any degree to woman's charms, to determine to make her acquaintance. It was only one sentence, to be sure, but there had been a world of meaning in every tone.

In his dilemma he decided upon a course of action which may not have been entirely generous, but which was at least in line with accepted detective methods.

Going to Green's boat-yard, he secured a skiff and rowed out to Dolphin Island.

"Where is my rope?" demanded Greeley before he even offered his assistance in getting the skiff up on the rocks.

"By Jove, I forgot all about that rope," said Turner, "but the coroner promised he would return it."

"If he don't, I'll have the law on him," growled the fisherman. "Good manila rope ain't hardly to be got nowadays at any price, and I ain't goin' to have no coroner walkin' off with a whole new coil that cost me twenty-seven cents a pound."

"You're right," said Tom. "I wouldn't stand for it if I were you. Did you get your five dollars for recovering the body?"

"No, I ain't got that neither," said Greeley. "This is a fine country, where city officials keep citizens out of their dues and robbin' 'em into the bargain."

"Well," said Mace soothingly, "that seems to be a spare coil of rope, and as for the money, I don't suppose you are in want."

"Well, I ain't rich enough to be robbed," grumbled Greeley, "and I wish you'd help me get my rights."

"Sure I will," promised the detective, "but right now I'd like to go fishing."

"All right," said Greeley. "I dug some worms on the low tide this morning, and I guess we can get a mess of flounders, all right."

Anchored out in the bay, they drew in the flat fish by ones and twos until they had nearly a bucketful.

Then Greeley wound up his lines and began cleaning the fish, leaving Turner to go on with his fishing.

A large ocean-going private yacht came down the Channel. Although the skiff was anchored inside the channel buoys, there was plenty of room for her to pass, but she came straight for them.

As she approached, Greeley began to show signs of uneasiness. "Why don't the blankety-blank lubbers port their helm?" he exclaimed.

The bow watchman ignored them, and as the space narrowed, Greeley stood up and bellowed:

"Port your helm, you son of a seacook! Can't you see you're going to run us down? Port your helm!"

If the man on the bow or the one on the bridge heard, they gave no sign. Greeley had just time to grab an oar and fend off as the sharp prow struck them. The swell stood the skiff on her beam-ends, and then the skiff's painter, catching in the yacht's propeller, was pulled under and the two men were left struggling on the surface of the water, surrounded by the remnants of their catch of fish.

Greeley was furious. The disaster had come upon Turner so suddenly that he had hardly time to think before he was thrown into the water. He was a good swimmer, and instinctively he started in the direction the skiff had taken.

The fast-turning propeller chewed off the line with which the skiff had been anchored, and the wooden boat, though filled with water, rose to the surface. Both Mace and Greeley got hold of her and looked toward the yacht, which continued on its way as though nothing had happened. Through a window in the cabin, which overlooked the stern of the vessel, the detective caught a glimpse of a sinister face. Quickly he noted its outlines and expression, trying to identify it.

Greeley was recovering the oars and trying to bail the boat with his cap. He had thriftily tried to capture such of the fish as had floated momentarily on the surface, but without success.

"It's only a hundred yards or so to the island, and the tide is with us," suggested Mace. "We may as well swim for it."

"Some day I'll catch that fellow, and he'll swim for it," declared Greeley. "I've sailed the seven seas, and I never had anybody do anything like that to me before. I don't see what he's got agin us."

"It must be somebody that I've rubbed the wrong way some time," said Turner. "In my business, you know, you always have to be hurting some one's feelings. When he looked out of the cabin window he looked as though he was quite well pleased with himself."

They had little to do but to direct the course of the boat, and soon they landed on the island. They bailed her out, pulled her up, took new lines and fresh bait, and went out and caught another mess of fish.

At the supper-table the officer opened the subject of finance. "It's none of my business," said he, "but sometimes I've wondered what a sailor-man like you does with his savings."

"I ain't got no use for banks, I tell you that," said Greeley.

"It's funny how differently many people do look at things," said the detective. "Now, I would feel much safer with my money in the bank than I would if it were around the house, or even in my pocket. You wouldn't think that a detective would have his pockets picked, but that happens every once in a while."

"Nobody ain't ever picked my pockets," said Greeley with evident pride, "and nobody ever will; and there ain't no bank what's going to get my money, either. I know where it is, and when I want it I can get it, and I don't have to write no checks nor ask anybody for it."

"Well, I see I'm not going to find out where you keep it," said Mace. "I don't care, I don't want it. What started me thinking about banks was that I found out yesterday that that girl Hilda, who swam out here that morning, works in a bank—the International Bank."

Greeley made an effort to appear unconcerned, but Mace could tell by the twitching of his jaw and the reddening of his ears that he was deeply interested.

"It seems to me that I've heard of that there bank," said Greeley after a long pause. "It's a pretty good bank, ain't it?"

"Why, if any of them are safe, the International ought to be," replied Turner. "Its assets run up into the millions, and it has an enormous surplus. It's one of those institutions which is patronized a good deal by sailors, and sailors, you know, quite often go away and never come back."

"And then what happens to their money?" inquired Greeley.

"Why, the law compels the bank to keep it and add the interest, so that if a depositor or his legal heirs and assigns do show up it will be ready for them."

Greeley cogitated, and at intervals emitted a grunt which seemed to be the result of mental struggle, but up to the time when Turner left the island he had little to say.

The next morning the detective, in a new disguise, stationed himself near the International Bank. A little before nine o'clock he saw Hilda enter. A few minutes after nine a sailor-man, in whose rolling gait he instantly recognized his friend from Dolphin Island, came down the street, studying the signs as he wandered along. Before the door of the bank he paused and deciphered the letters on the gilt name-plate. His right hand clung tenaciously to his hip-pocket, in which it could be plainly seen there reposed an ample wallet.

CHAPTER NINE

SYSTEM

THE minutes rolled by, and Greeley did not come out again. Mace could not restrain his curiosity and, trusting to his disguise, went in to see what had happened to the sailor-man.

He found his friend inextricably wound up in the institution's red tape. The fisherman's idea of opening an account at the bank was to lay his wallet on the counter, and when he wanted money, to come in again and get it.

Greeley had presented himself at the first window he saw, which happened to be the paying-teller's. He shoved in his wallet and waited while the teller finished making up the money for a pay-roll which a customer had left with him a few moments before.

Looking up from his work, the teller saw the sailor waiting patiently for attention. "Can I do anything for you?" he asked.

"If you don't mind, you might keep this here money for me," replied Greeley. "That's what a bank's for, ain't it?"

"We receive deposits, yes, sir," replied the teller. "The receiving-teller is at the second window down."

"Didn't s'pose there'd be enough money coming in so that you'd have to have two hatches open," remarked Greeley, shuffling along to the second window down, where he again shoved in his wallet.

"Where's your book?" asked the receiving-teller.

"What book?" asked Greeley. "Being ashore now, I ain't a-keepin' of no log."

"I mean your bankbook," explained the teller.

"Search me," said Greeley. "I didn't suppose you had to have a book before you could put money in the bank."

"Oh, I understand; you wish to open an account," said the teller.

"No, I didn't come to open no account," replied Greeley. "I come to put my money in the bank."

"Well, that's what we call opening an account," said the teller. "If you'll just step into the treasurer's room the system will be explained to you."

Patiently the fisherman picked up his wallet again and made his way past the row of windows and into the door which the receiving-teller had pointed out. An affable clerk came and tried to explain the bank's system for handling its accounts. "Of course, you understand," said he, "that if you want to have a checking account it will be necessary for you to maintain a balance of $250."

"I've always been able to keep my balance up aloft," said Greeley, "but I'll be blowed if I know how to do it in a bank. What do you mean I've got to balance my $250?"

"I mean," explained the clerk, "that you must at all times have at least $250 in the bank if you want to have a checking account."

"I don't want to have a checking account," said Greeley.

"All I want is to put my money in here and have you folks keep it safe and give it back to me with interest when I want it."

The clerk smiled. "A checking account," said he, "is one which is subject to draft. It means that you can draw out money when you want to."

"Well, why would anybody put money in a bank if they couldn't draw it out when they wanted to?" said Greeley.

The clerk tried again. "Of course, any one who deposits money in a bank is entitled to withdraw it when he will," he explained, "but sometimes an amount is deposited with the understanding that it is to remain in the bank for a definite period. We call that a savings account. It is not like an account which the depositor adds to and draws upon from day to day."

A big book was brought and opened before Greeley. On its pages were numerous signatures. The sailor smiled. "I had one of these books once," said he, "only not so big. My mother called it an autigraft album."

"Sign here," said the clerk, pointing to a vacant line.

Greeley was about to put the pen to the paper, when he drew it away again. "You are all strangers to me," he said. "I don't know's I ought to sign my name to anything. How do I know but that you'll use it agin me?"

The clerk was beginning to lose patience. "You'll have to sign, or you can't open an account here," he said sharply.

Greeley bristled up. "There ain't no man what can tell me what I must do and what I mustn't," he said angrily.

There's no telling where the argument might have led had it not been interrupted at this point by a cheery voice —"Let me explain to the gentleman."

Greeley arose quickly, upsetting the ink as he did so, and dropping the pen, which rolled across the open page, leaving a blot at every revolution. He turned fiery red right up to the tips of his hair. "Howdy, miss, howdy," he said over and over again.

The irate clerk clutched for blotters and began mopping up the ink with *sotto voce* remarks about the awkwardness of sailors.

"Never mind," said Hilda. "What's a little ink, more or less. Won't you be seated, sir?"

Greeley, perched on the edge of the chair in as uncomfortable a position as a human being could well assume, keeping his eyes upon Hilda, and a foolish grin upon his weather-beaten countenance, "You are the girl who swims," he stammered.

"The girl," she laughed. "Not the only one, I'm sure."

"The only one who swims like you do," elucidated Greeley.

"Why, yes, of course; no two persons swim exactly alike," she assented.

"No," grinned Greeley. " 'Tain't many as swim a mile and back afore breakfast just for the fun of it."

"Strange, isn't it," said she, "that so few people know how to appreciate the good old ocean."

"More would, if they only knew all what was in it," said he with a sly wink.

Hilda laughed and blushed. "I've always wished that I could have an island all to myself, like you," said she.

"You could have mine, if it was mine," said Greeley, "but I'm only a squatter. I found Dolphin Island just layin' around loose like with nobody to claim it, so I just says, says I, 'Greeley,' says I, 'they must have left that there island for you.' "

"Such a dear little cottage you have, too."

" 'Tain't bad, 'tain't bad," said Greeley. "When they's a fire inside and a kittle of chowder on the stove, 'tain't bad, only kind o' lonesome."

"It must be lonesome," said Hilda, and then, lowering her eyes before the ardent gaze of the fisherman, "now what about this bank account you want to start?"

"Why, I just made up my mind," said Greeley, "that 'tain't real safe to have my savin's lyin' around in the toe of a stockin'. Somebody might come ashore some dark night when I was sleepin' heavy and make off with it, and so, knowin' that banks was made just to put money in, I decided I'd put mine in."

"And how did you happen to honor us with your patronage?"

"A friend of mine," replied Greeley, "told me that the International was the best bank and had the most money and took the best care of it and had the nicest clerks in the country."

Hilda laughed musically. "I hope we may live up to the reputation your friend has given us," said she.

"It's true, all right," declared Greeley, "especially what he said about the clerks."

Hilda handed him the pen and pointed out the space in which he was to sign. Putting his nose close to the book, and his tongue in the corner of his mouth, Greeley spelled out his cognomen and added a period, which, because of his vigorous method of making it, spread out to the diameter of a half-inch.

"May I ask who this friend of yours is who has recommended us so highly?" asked Hilda.

The detective, just outside the door, studied her face closely as Greeley framed his reply. "Why, sure you can ask," said he, "and I'll tell ye. He ain't a sailor-man, you know, and of course you can't expect him to be as good a fellow as us who follow the sea. He's only a detective."

"Really, how interesting," replied Hilda. "And his name?"

"Mace Turner." As Greeley mentioned his name, a strange light shone in Hilda's eye. For the life of him, the detective could not make it out.

Determined to fathom the meaning of her expression, he entered the room as Greeley turned to leave it. "I beg pardon," he said, "but may I open an account here?"

"Certainly," said she sweetly. "George, will you please attend to this customer?"

Turner could scarcely restrain his disappointment as she tripped out of the room and into another, on whose opaque glass window was the word "President."

He asked many questions and took as much time as possible, hoping that she would come out again and that he would have an opportunity to speak to her. But he did not see her again.

All day long he kept within sight of the bank. Judging from the character of its depositors it was well named. Apparently they came from all quarters of the globe.

At one o'clock Hilda made a visit to a neighboring lunchroom, returning again in a half-hour. At three o'clock the bank closed. By four most of the employees had gone. From then until six no person left the building by either the front or the side entrances without his knowledge. Seven o'clock came, eight o'clock, nine o'clock, but the young woman who was uppermost in his mind had not departed.

The officer on the beat came along and tried the doors. As he went on, Turner crossed over and looked in, first at the front door and then at the side. The banking quarters were empty.

CHAPTER TEN

STOWAWAYS

NOT being able to make much progress in his investigation as to the mysterious woman in the case, Mace Turner decided to spend a day or two in search of the man who had glared out at him from the cabin of the yacht after his boat had been swamped by it.

He invited Greeley to meet him at a hostelry near the waterfront in order that he might have the benefit of the sailor's store of knowledge of the sea and ships.

Greeley was interested the moment he mentioned the project. "I'm with ye in that," he said. "I want to get hold of that son of a seacook. I want to get hold of him and that coroner and string one up on each end of my new manila rope."

"Hasn't the coroner returned with that line yet?" Turner asked in assumed surprise—assumed, because the coroner, a really faithful official, had returned the rope to

him the day before, and had received his assurance that it would be returned to Greeley.

"No, dog-gone him," said Greeley, "and I don't believe he means to. If I can find an honest lawyer I'll sue him for it."

"I would," said Mace. "What was the name of the yacht?" he asked a moment later.

"She didn't have no name on her," replied Greeley. "It warn't on her bow nor on her stern, and on the pilot-house, where the law requires it, it was covered up. That shows there was something crooked about her."

"She did carry a flag," said Turner. "I don't mean the Stars and Stripes at the stern, but some sort of an emblem at her masthead."

"Yes," said Greeley, "she did have the code flag 'N' at her fore-peak; you know the flag, it looks like a checker-board."

"That was it," assented the detective. "Can she be identified by that?"

"Maybe yes, and maybe no," said Greeley; "but, anyhow, I can give a good description of her, and down at the custom-house I can find out who she is, where she hails from and who is the owner."

"Will you do that for me?" asked Mace eagerly.

"I sure will," said Greeley. "Will you come along, or will you meet me here in a couple of hours?"

"I think I'll let you go alone," said Turner. "I'll come back here in two hours and wait until you arrive."

Greeley wore a satisfied look as he tilted back in his chair after his return from his investigation. "She's the *Carissima*, a private yacht," said he. "Owner, Richard Persley; 6,000 tons. The code flag means that she's connected with the Nautilus Line. The owner is something or other with the Nautilus company."

The detective went to the hotel office and came back with a city directory. He ran his finger down a page or two and then suddenly stopped, his eyes glowing with excitement. "You don't suppose that fellow in the cabin was the owner, do you?" he asked.

"Why not?" said Greeley. "The cabin's the proper place for the owner."

"Why?"

"Well, if it was," said the officer, "the man who ran us down, and who seemed to be having so much fun about it afterwards, was Richard Persley, the president of your bank."

"My bank?" said Greeley. "What do you mean, my bank?"

"The bank where you put your money," explained Mace. "The president of the International Bank is the owner of the yacht *Carissima*, if your information is correct."

"The dirty shark," explained Greeley. "I'm going down to get my money before he steals it."

"Now, wait," said Turner. "Don't be in a hurry. Persley is the president of the International Bank. Miss Hilda Hornsten is the secretary to the president. The president, or his crew, run us down in cold blood while we are innocently fishing in the edge of the Channel. If he would try to kill two men, why isn't it probable that he has tried to kill others, and succeeded? While I didn't get a very good look at him, I feel quite sure that he has never figured in any case that I had anything to do with before. You don't know him, either. It's well known along the shore that both of us are interested in the case of a man whose dead body came ashore on your island. Does it seem probable to you that there may be some connection between these facts?"

"I'll be blowed if there ain't," said Greeley. "A man wouldn't run down a couple of fellow bein's in cold blood if he didn't have something agin 'em. The *Carissima* is at her pier right now. Let's go down to-night and have a look at her."

That evening Turner watched the bank again for several hours in the hope that he might find out when and how Hilda left it after the day's work; but he learned no more than before. Later in the evening he joined Greeley on the waterfront, and together they went to the Nautilus Line pier, where the *Carissima* was tied up.

The guard stopped them at the entrance. "No admittance" was written all over him. In vain they offered him cigars, in vain they offered excuses for their desire to have a look at the yacht. To every plea, he made one answer, "Nothing doing."

They withdrew around a corner. "Well, I guess it can't be done," remarked Turner.

"Of course it can," said Greeley. "There's more than one way to skin a cat. If you've got your nerve with you and don't mind getting your clothes dirty, come along, and I'll show you how to get aboard."

Following the sailor, Mace climbed a gate which guarded the entrance of a neighboring pier, climbed down a ladder slippery with seaweed, and stepped into a skiff which floated among the piles. There were no oars, but Greeley, lying along the bow, propelled it with his hands until he picked up two pieces of driftwood, which would serve as paddles.

They made their way along in the darkness until there loomed up before them the same white stern in whose wake they had floundered when their skiff had been wrecked off Dolphin Island.

The yacht lay with her port side against the pier. From the stern on the starboard side a long line reached to the next pier, sagging until it had nearly touched the water.

Greeley attached the skiff's painter to this hawser. "We'll have to go up it hand over hand," he said, "but that's nothing when you're used to it."

"I've done some climbing in the gymnasium," said the officer. "I'll take a chance."

"We'd better take off our shoes," said Greeley as he prepared to lead the way. "Then we can hang to the line better if we have to use our feet, and we won't make so much noise on board."

They swung along the line and reached the deck. A watchman came aft, evidently making a regular tour of the ship. They dropped behind a capstan and kept out of sight.

Creeping cautiously into the cabin after he passed, they felt their way about. It was a luxurious apartment, with a plush carpet and heavy tapestries.

Somewhere in the waist of the ship a dynamo was running, indicating that there was electric light, ready to be snapped on at a moment's notice.

A door in the further end of the cabin led into a smaller compartment, fitted up for sleeping quarters. The darkness was so intense that they were compelled to make their way slowly and blindly. The sleuth took the lead. He passed close to the bunks, in front of which hung curtains. He heard the sound of breathing. As he stood listening, the sleeper stirred uneasily.

The detective thought that the person, whoever it was, was about to rise, and he stepped quickly to one side to be out of sight in case a light was turned on.

Evidently the person in the bunk had been smoking before falling asleep. A tall ash receptacle stood beside the berth. Turner ran into this and upset it with an awful crash.

A hoarse exclamation from the man in the berth was followed instantly by a feminine query from an adjoining apartment. Mace felt Greeley's hand on his sleeve, and, following swiftly, was led down a dark companionway. As he reached the bottom, the lights were turned on in the compartment above.

In the dim, diffused light Greeley and Turner looked quickly about for a place of concealment. They felt, no doubt, that the watchman would be sent about the ship to discover what caused the accident to the ash receptacle. They found another companionway, leading down into the hold far below the water-line.

Indistinctly they heard the footsteps of the watchman summoned to the sleeping compartment, the muffled voices of several persons evidently discussing the incident, and then closer footsteps as the watchman came down to execute his orders. He even came into the hold where they were and flashed his light about, but they managed to keep out of sight.

After he had gone, they lay for an hour, fearing to

return to the upper deck. At last they decided to make a try for it, for everything seemed quiet.

In feeling their way about they came upon a long, smooth cylindrical object. Greeley ran his hand over the oily surface. "Must be the propeller shaft," he remarked.

As he spoke, the thing began to turn—slowly at first, then faster and faster.

"What's happening?" inquired Mace, hearing Greeley swearing softly under his breath.

"Unless all signs fail," replied the sailor, "you and me is about to take a voyage."

During the next two hours they made repeated attempts to reach the upper decks, but, although silence reigned, they never went far without finding their progress barred by some watchman on his rounds. At the end of that time the regular rise and fall of the ship on the swells made it clear that they were approaching, if not already in, the open sea.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"ANY OLD PLACE I HANG UP MY HAT"

"SHANGHAIED!" exclaimed Turner.

"No, 'tain't that," said Greeley, "bein' as how we come aboard of our own free will."

"Well, it amounts to the same thing," growled the detective, "we're here and we've got to stay."

"Well, don't get peevish until we've had a chance to overhaul this cargo," suggested Greeley. " 'Tain't likely if they're startin' for blue water that they ain't got plenty o' grub an' plenty to drink. You just crawl along back of me, an' I'll see if we can't chart a channel from here for'ard. The only thing I'm worried about is my shoes what I left in the skiff."

Greeley led the way, and the sleuth followed. The after hold in which they were was divided into compartments by rough, open partitions, after the manner of cargo holds. This much Greeley was able to determine almost immediately. He felt about, running his hands into the openings in the partitions and sniffing audibly from time to time. "In my opinion," said he, "the commissariat is O. K. If these ain't cases of can goods, then I miss my guess."

They went on a few feet farther. Mace heard a grunt of satisfaction, the popping of a cork, a gurgle, and then a splash. "Drat it," exclaimed the sailor. "If I'd stopped to smell the durned stuff I'd a-known it wasn't nuthin' but prickly water."

"I'm dying of thirst," said Turner. "If it's anything but poison, give me a drink."

" 'Tain't p'ison," said Greeley. " 'Twouldn't do all right for a chaser for them that likes chasers."

"Ah, Apollinaris!" exclaimed the officer, with a smack of satisfaction. "Do you think there's enough to last the voyage?"

Greeley felt about for a few moments. "Unless there's a powerful lot of passengers an' they like prickly water better than I do, you needn't be afraid of dyin' of thirst, unless we're out for one o' those three-year whaling voyages like they used to take in the good old days."

Continuing their way forward, they passed through an open bulkhead, went by the coal bunkers, and on into the forward hold, which was redolent of tar and oakum. "Glory be!" exclaimed Greeley. Mace felt a draught of crisp, salt air, and heard the swishing of the waves as the sailor silently opened a port. "I couldn't recollect," said Greeley, "whether she had port-holes into her forward hold or not. That day she run us down I was too busy tryin' to make that fool of a bow watchman hear me to rightly notice. Unless they need their spare sails and hawsers there's no reason why we can't have as much light an' air an' modern conveniences here as the city chaps advertise in them flats-to-let columns in the daily papers, an' a durn sight more than they really do have when you come to see the flats."

All the time he was talking he was busy with the sailcloth. Through the port the starlight faintly illuminated the triangular-shaped space formed by the bow of the boat. The detective climbed up on a coil of rope and looked out. "Where are we?" he asked.

"We've passed the Hook," said Greeley, "an' we're headed northeast by east."

"How do you know that?" asked the officer.

"By the lighthouses," answered Greeley, "an' by the stars. Off the port bow here you can see the big dipper, an' by drawing a line through the two outside stars of the bowl and continuing it out about six times the space between them you will come to the North Star. When you can see that, there's no need o' gettin' lost."

"What time is it?" asked Mace.

Greeley squinted out through a port-hole. "Somewhere a-tween twelve an' one," he said. "Hadn't you better turn in an' get some rest?"

"You'd better turn in yourself," said Turner.

"I don't know but that we might as well both turn in," said Greeley. "But no, we better have a lookout. You turn in, and when my watch is up I'll call you."

Sooner than he would have expected, the detective fell asleep, to dream of beautiful maidens in distress, cruel villains oppressing them, and the valiant deeds of bold detectives. When he opened his eyes the sunlight was streaming in. He rose and stretched and looked out. The sky was cloudless and the ship rose and fell gently as she ploughed through a sea as calm as a mill pond.

Greeley came forward from a trip to the after part of the ship, loaded with eatables. "When I get well enough acquainted with this craft, so I can get up an' swipe stuff out of the ice-box an' mebbe make a cup of coffee now an' then in the galley, we won't have anything to complain of so far as the grub is concerned," he said as he began to open cans of meat, fish, vegetables and fruit. "There ought to be something decent to drink somewhere in the cargo, too, but where they keep it is a mystery to me, right now."

"How am I going to get my morning bath?" inquired Turner, thinking that he would stick the sailor on something.

Greeley rolled his eyes around. "Are you one of them kind of fellers?" he inquired with a disappointed air. "In Nantucket, where I was raised, my mother taught me that the only proper time to have a bath was Saturday night."

"It's too bad," said the detective, "that a man gets into so many bad habits living in the city. If I don't have a bath in the morning I feel dirty all day."

"Well, if ye have to have it I s'pose ye have to have it," said Greeley, "though I don't see how you get yourself so dirty all the time." He took an empty Apollinaris bottle, tied a string around the neck, and went to a port. First poking his head out cautiously, to make sure that no one was looking, he lowered the bottle and pulled up a quart of salt water. With this he saturated a strip of reasonably clean sail-cloth as large as a Turkish towel. "Now strip off an' go to it," he said.

Turner did as the sailor directed, and raised a ruddy glow. Then they sat down to breakfast. As they were finishing the report of a cannon came rolling across the water. Greeley sprang to his feet and quickly but silently closed and fastened the ports. "We're going to have a visitor," said he. "I hope he finds enough to interest him above decks, so he won't go poking around down here. Howsumever, we've got to be prepared to make ourselves scarce. You take a look at the stranger while I put things ship-shape."

The detective went from port to port until he got a glimpse of the ship which had fired the warning shot. It was a cruiser flying a British flag. The *Carissima's* propellers had stopped immediately, and the cruiser approached to within half a mile.

A launch was lowered, and as she came speeding across the intervening water the yacht's gangway was made ready.

Turner wished that he might open a port and put his head out far enough to get a glimpse of the faces he felt sure would line the rail, but obviously this was too risky.

"Would there be any chance of our getting a squint at the ceremony when they come aboard?" he asked Greeley.

"Well," said the sailor, "I suppose the crew will all be on deck. "We might sneak up the forward companionway and take a chance."

Waiting until the launch was swinging from the *Carissima's* boom, they went to the companionway and tiptoed up. The ordinary seamen's quarters were just above the hold, which they had appropriated to their own use. Greeley inspected these and came back with a bundle under his arm. "Let's go below again for a minute," he said.

Mace Turner did not see what he was driving at, but he followed the sailor back to their quarters. Greeley unrolled the bundle and displayed two complete uniforms, such as the sailors on the yacht wore.

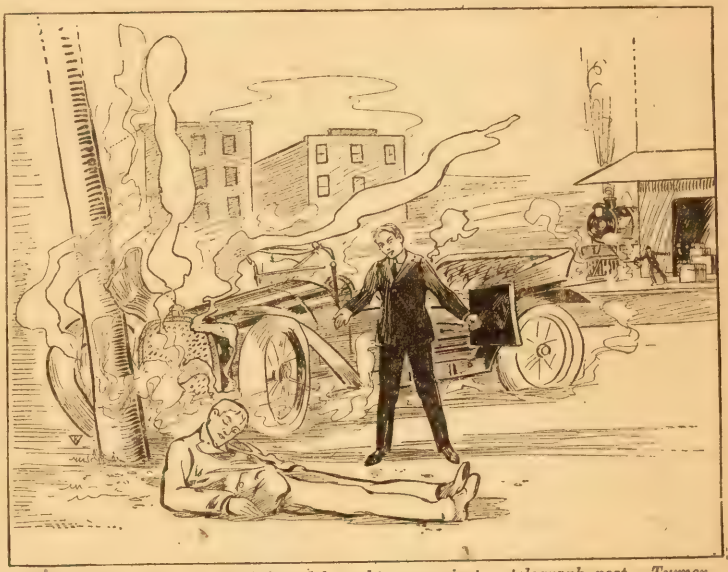
"I don't know whether I can stand for this or not," said Mace. "Of course, we've got to steal our grub, but this seems like adding insult to injury."

"Who's stealin' anything?" demanded Greeley with an injured air. "I just borrowed these togs; they've got more than they need, an' we can return them by and by. You see, if anybody would happen to see us it's going to be a lot better to see two of the ship's uniforms than it is to see just common store clothes an' stockin'feet."

"You're right, as usual," said Turner, and they donned the uniforms which Greeley had found, after which they consulted as to the best method of procedure. Though the uniforms did not exactly fit them as they would have liked, still they were better than running a risk such as they would have been compelled to have undergone had they appeared in their civilian clothes.

Then they again ascended the companionway, passed through the crew's quarters and up another companionway until they commanded a view of the main deck. At the door of the cabin stood the man who had smiled darkly out at them from the stern of the boat after the *Carissima* had run them down. He was smiling benevolently and bidding the English officers to enter. The crew stood at attention at either side. Beside Persley, whom the detective decided this dark man must be, was Hilda, glorious in a spotless white yachting costume, her brown curls floating in the breeze.

The police officer caught his breath quickly. So did Greeley. Then the two glared at each other. Mace was the first to recover his equanimity. He grinned, and turned to watch the interesting scene.



The machine swerved, skidded, and brought up against a telegraph post. Turner was tossed out upon the gravel.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PERISCOPE OUTSIDE THE PORT

THE detective and the sailor would have been glad to keep watch until the end of the visit, or even approach near enough to see what was going on in the cabin, but Persley dismissed most of the crew, and they returned to their posts about the ship, sending the stowaways scuttling to their quarters below decks, where they decided to remain and look on the scene below from their small windows.

From their port-holes they kept watch as well as they could, but they could see nothing of any consequence until the British officers took their leave.

Coming down the gangway with every evidence of satisfaction and good will, they took Persley and Hilda on board the launch for a visit to the cruiser. Evidently they remained for lunch, for it was fully two hours before they returned.

The marked attention which the Englishmen showered upon Hilda filled Turner with most unprofessional jealousy, and the sailor seemed to look upon them as a deliberate and intentional affront to himself.

After the launch had returned the owner and his fair companion to the yacht, the humor of the situation dawned upon Mace. "See here, Greeley," he said, "we've got to quit making fools of ourselves over this girl. Of course, she's pretty and all that, but we must not allow ourselves to be so much impressed by her beauty as to forget that our business is to discover whether or not if she is connected with the murder of the man who came ashore on Dolphin Island."

"Well, if she is, it ain't in any way that's agin her reputation," declared Greeley.

"I trust not," assented Turner, "but it does look as though she was mixed up with a bad lot."

The yacht got under way, and the British cruiser was soon lost to sight below the western horizon.

Mace consulted Greeley as to their next move.

It seemed hardly safe to prowl about in the day-time, but since they had the ship's uniforms the detective and his companion did take some chances.

At night they could move about with considerably more freedom, although a strict watch was maintained by the officers and crew. At the best, however, the confinement was irksome, and it began to be difficult for the detective

to restrain the sailor from doing desperate deeds which might lead to their discovery.

"I believe I could scrape an acquaintance with some o' the crew," declared Greeley, "and find out something about his royal nibs."

"Don't try it," cautioned Turner; "you know what he did to us off Dolphin Island. If he found us here he'd throw us to the sharks, as sure as preaching."

"I've sailed on many a ship," replied Greeley, "an' I never found a crew so fond of the 'old man' that they wouldn't stick up for one of their own kind agin him."

"But we don't want to place ourselves in a position where we must either start a mutiny or walk the plank," argued the sleuth.

An opportunity for making an acquaintance came quite unexpectedly. One day, when they were prowling about in the depths of the vessel, they suddenly heard excited voices approaching the companionway. A sailor, mad with rage, struggled for a moment at the top of the stairs with several who were attempting to hold him, and then, felled by a blow from a belaying-pin, he came tumbling down into the hold and lay moaning.

With a muttered curse Greeley started for the companionway with the evident intention of giving battle to those who had treated the sailor so brutally. The detective restrained him. "Wait," said he, "we will attend to the injured man, but there's no use in stirring up a hornet's nest in doing it."

Making the sailor as comfortable as possible, they dressed his wounded head with materials from the cargo, and presently he revived. The moment he opened his eyes and caught sight of the uniforms he showed signs of fight. But Greeley calmed him with a "What's the ailin' of ye, matey?"

With bloodshot eyes the man looked him over. "I see you're members of the crew, all right," said he, "but I don't recollect seein' you afore."

"I'll give you two more guesses," replied Greeley.

"But you've got the uniform, all right," insisted the man.

"There's lots of folks as has things what don't belong to them," suggested Greeley.

"You ain't stowaways?" asked the man incredulously.

"You said it," replied Greeley.

"Put her there," said the sailor. "Any man as can slip by old Foxy Grandpa up there has got my respect. How did you do it?"

"You didn't happen to cast off the hawser on the starboard side of the yacht the night you set sail, did you?" asked Greeley.

"No," said the sailor, "but I was near it."

"Well, you don't recollect that there was a skiff made fast to it, do you?"

"There was that," declared the sailor, "and we set her adrift."

"You shouldn't a-done it," said Greeley. "Didn't you know there was a law agin settin' boats adrift?"

"Well, you can't stop a 6,000-ton ship while you go back and tie up a rummy old skiff to a pier," remonstrated the sailor, "but I'm sorry if we lost you your boat."

"Oh, it wasn't our boat," said Greeley nonchalantly. "All we lost was our shoes what we left into it. Now we got us some new ones, so we don't care."

Turner interrupted the conversation. "What was the trouble?" he asked. "Why were you struck down like a dog and thrown into the hold?"

The sailor scowled. "Jest fur nothin' at all," said he. "I'm a new man. Not bein' a fool, I kind of a-took an interest in the ship an' asked a few questions about what she was an' where she was goin'. That seemed to make 'em all suspicious of me. It seems as how questions ain't popular, especially on the quarterdeck. I know just exactly as much about the craft now as I knew before, an' no more."

"She's a private yacht, I understand," said Turner.

"Yes."

"And she belongs to Richard Persley, the president of the International Bank."

"Aye, she does."

"And he is connected with the Nautilus Line, and his yacht sails under its colors."

"So I've heard."

"And she's sailing for——"

"Somewhere in France."

"Does she make frequent trips?"

"One of the boys told me she was almost as regular as one of the liners."

"Does the owner always go with her?"

"Not always, but often."

"The young lady—what about her?"

Turner leaned forward expectantly.

"Lord! Ain't she pretty!" exclaimed the sailor.

"Who is she? Did you find that out?"

"She's his secretary; you know," said the sailor, making motions like a stenographer taking notes.

"Do you think," began Turner, and then he stopped abruptly. He could not bring himself to ask a question of the sailor which might reflect in any way upon the character of the young lady.

Greeley winked at the sailor, who had caught the question in the detective's mind as quickly as he had. "She's straight, all right; leastways, if she ain't she's a foxy one, but she's a puzzle. They say she's got a brother in the trenches, and that she expects to see him this trip."

The yacht, which had been ploughing along at her usual speed, suddenly lost headway. Greeley and Mace ran forward to their quarters, and the sailor rose and staggered after them. The detective stepped up on a coil of rope and looked out of one of the ports. He found himself looking straight at a periscope, which gradually rose until the arched deck from which it protruded came into view.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Greeley, who had taken his position at another port. "If she lets go a torpedo we're done for."

But the submarine did not fire at the yacht. Instead, a trio of officers emerged from a hatch, and through a megaphone conversed with some one, presumably the owner, on the bridge above them. A boat was lowered from the *Carissima*, and the German officers were brought aboard. They were received with the same ceremony which had accompanied the visit of the British officers. Again Greeley and Turner went up and caught a glimpse of the scene outside the cabin-door.

Persley and Hilda went aboard the submarine and came back again. The German officers were as courteous to her as the Englishmen had been.

As the yacht steamed on her way again, the detective sat down with a puzzled expression. "Hobnobbing with the Allies one day, and with the Germans the next!" he exclaimed. "What kind of a man is this we're up against?"

"Allies, Teutons and neutrals is all the same to him," declared the sailor. "Have you got anything to eat, mates? I ain't had a square meal since we sailed."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE AMBULANCE CORPS

IN order that the crew might not be led to their quarters in the bow, the detective suggested to the sailor that he keep near the companionway down which he had been thrown whenever there appeared to be any likelihood of a visit from above. It was soon discovered that these visits were made systematically during certain watches. It was only necessary for the sailor to go to the foot of the companionway to receive the bread and water which were brought to him twice daily, and which he only made a bluff of using at the time, saving them to add to the more elaborate ménu which Greeley provided from the cargo.

The sailor did not know what fate awaited him when they landed in Europe, which was evidently their destination, since the North Star still hung off the port bow. Greeley and Turner, however, felt sure that they knew

what their fate would be if they were discovered, and many a discussion was held as to ways and means for leaving the ship.

It was Greeley's practical mind which formulated a plausible plan. His investigation of the cargo had been carried even to the interior of the motor ambulances, and he worked out a scheme for removing some of the equipment packed in one of these and making a space large enough for the two of them to lie in, without being seen.

As soon as the crew began clearing away the anchors on the deck above them, Greeley knew that the landing was near. Putting everything in the hold in as near as possible the condition in which he had found it, he prepared to move into the ambulance the moment the first move was made to open the hatches.

At the suggestion of Mace the sailor, for whom they had been caring, professed penitence when a member of the crew came to feed him, and was restored to his standing among the crew. He had had such a good time with the detective and his sailor friend that he was reluctant to leave, and did so with protestations of friendship and assertions that he would see them again.

He thought the ambulance trick was great, and promised to do what he could to see that they got ashore in good shape.

After a few hours at anchor a tug took the yacht to a pier, and immediately the unloading began. Persley and Hilda went ashore, as the sleuth ascertained by watching from a port. He was loath to lose sight of them, but there was no way to keep them in view, except to boldly leave his retreat and attempt to walk ashore by the same gangway. This was decidedly too risky.

When they heard the crew begin to knock out the wedges which fastened the coverings of the hatch, Turner and Greeley crawled into the ambulance and ensconced themselves underneath the folding berths, or litters. Presently ropes were lowered and attached to the ambulance, which was hoisted up through the hatch and swung onto the pier. As the upward motion ceased and the boom was about to swing outward, they heard a series of taps on the body of the ambulance—ta-ta-ta-ta, ta-ta, ta. It was the well-known rhythm of "Over the fence is out." Their sailor was on the job.

They did not deem it safe to leave the ambulance while the pier was as crowded as it was at that moment, although they were far from comfortable in their cramped quarters. Before an opportunity offered for getting away, a gang of stevedores, jabbering in French, took their machine and rolled it into a freight-car with several other machines of the same type.

As the door was closed and locked, Greeley crawled out with a rueful expression. "I deserve to be kicked to death by a sea horse," he exclaimed. "I didn't provision the ship."

"It is no more your fault than mine," said Mace. "It never occurred to me that we would motor by train."

They tried the doors and found that there was no chance of forcing the lock. "We might kick the side out," said Greeley; but the detective disapproved.

"We are strangers in a strange land," he said, "and we better not start anything. If what the sailor said about Hilda is true, it is quite probable that she and her employer may be bound for the same destination as these ambulances. Possibly, chance is taking us toward our goal more rapidly than our best-laid plans could have carried us there."

"Maybe you're right," assented Greeley; "anyhow, France ain't so big that we'll starve to death before we get to the interior, if this freight train keeps on a-movin'."

The freight train did keep on moving, and in the course of twenty-four hours arrived at a military base, where the ambulances and other equipment were promptly unloaded. Watching for a chance, the two slipped out of their snug nests, thinking to get away unobserved; but they had underestimated the vigilance of the French army. As they touched the ground a guard appeared, mechanically presented arms, and then set up a shout:

"*Le corps d'ambulance! Le corps d'ambulance!*"

In an instant they were surrounded by scores of *poilus*, shouting "'Allo, Sammies!" and fighting for a chance to kiss them on both cheeks.

The detective diplomatically concealed his feelings and responded to the greeting as cordially as he could, but Greeley, as soon as he could get his breath, exclaimed disgustedly:

"I wish I had taken my chances with the sharks."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN THE TRENCHES

THE French entertained Turner and Greeley royally. The fact that they did not wish to be entertained did not enter into the consideration. When they demurred it was taken as an evidence of a desire not to impose upon the hospitality of their hosts. As neither of them spoke French, it was impossible for them to make their status known.

It was pleasant fraternizing with men so very generous in their desires and so cordial in their expression of them, but Mace could not forget the quest upon which he was bent, and he was anxious to locate the only two people who, so far as he knew, could throw any light upon the murder mystery.

The second day, while being shown about the encampment by some of the soldiers, the detective and Greeley were introduced to an American ambulance driver. They scarcely waited for the introduction, so glad were all of them to greet men of their own nationality. Seeking an opportunity to converse alone with the American, Turner drew him out.

He was a New Yorker, a college man, who had gone to France at his own expense in order to help the French, long before the United States had declared war. Turner soon decided that he could trust him and that he would be a valuable ally. He told him of the murder mystery and of his unsuccessful efforts to discover any tangible clue to its solution. He spoke rather hesitatingly of the telepathic influences, which seemed in a mysterious way to connect Hilda Hornsten and Richard Persley with the case.

"I hear much of Richard Persley," said the American. "He has done much for the ambulance service in France. I understand that he brought over a number of ambulances and a considerable amount of surgical supplies in his private yacht."

"He did," said Turner with a quiet smile. "I came with him."

"You are a friend of his, then?" inquired the ambulance man.

"No, I haven't that honor," replied the detective; "as a matter of fact, the gentleman did not know that he had me as a passenger."

The ambulance driver raised his brows inquiringly. "You detectives do queer things," he said.

"The things we do are sometimes as unexpected to us as they are to others," answered Turner. "In fact, I left for Europe so unexpectedly and suddenly that I came away without my shoes."

The driver looked down at his substantial footgear, and Mace hastened to explain, "My sailor companion and I were obliged to borrow shoes from a case which we found in the hold of Persley's yacht."

"We have some strange adventures over here," said the ambulance driver, "but apparently you have us 'skun' a mile."

"Would you know Richard Persley if you saw him?" inquired the officer.

"He has been at the camp here," replied the American, "but I was out at the time and I have never seen him. But he is so well known that we all should surely hear of it if he honors us with a visit."

"You will hear about his secretary, all right, if she comes with him," declared the sleuth. "All the men will be raving about her."

The American looked away across the level country with an expression of loneliness. "We don't see many women here," he said. "She wouldn't have to be a beauty in order to get us going."

"For reasons which you will understand, I do not wish to be seen by Persley or his secretary," said the detective quickly. "I wonder if I could trouble you to let me know if they appear here, or if you hear of their being in any of the other camps?"

"I shall be glad to help you in any way I can," said the American. "By the way, did you say her name was Hornsten?"

"Yes," said Turner. "Hilda Hornsten."

"There used to be a fellow here by the name of Hornsten," said the ambulance driver. "I have forgotten what branch of the service he was in, but I think it was the infantry. He disappeared mysteriously. I say mysteriously, because many of the men in the first-line trenches never come back and we never know just what did happen to them. After one of those big shells explode there may not be enough left of a man to serve as a means of identification. Some are captured, and of course a few desert. But this fellow Hornsten seemed to disappear without anybody's being able to explain just how it happened. He hadn't been over the top, and the enemy hadn't been in the trench where he was posted and he didn't seem like a fellow who would go back on his oath."

"How long ago did you say this happened?" asked Mace, greatly interested.

"Let's see," mused the American. "It must have been about two months ago. It was just about the time that Persley visited the camp last."

The officer looked startled. "What sort of a man was this man Hornsten?" he asked.

"He was a man about thirty, I should say," replied the ambulance driver. "He looked as though he might be a Swede—round face, fair complexion, light hair. He would weigh about a hundred and forty-five or thereabout, I should say."

"My God! You don't suppose that fiend in human form would murder the girl's brother and then bring her to Europe on the pretext that she was to see him, do you?"

"You don't mean——" The American paused.

"Yes, I mean Persley," declared Turner.

"You're all wrong," said the ambulance driver. "You must be wrong. Persley is known throughout two continents. He is one of the best friends of the American troops in France. At this moment his gifts are being distributed throughout the length and breadth of the camp."

"It does seem incredible," said Mace, wavering, "and as a matter of fact, I have not the slightest bit of evidence against him. I must keep my mind free from prejudice, and simply push the investigation until it leads somewhere."

At this moment Greeley came rolling in, accompanied by some of his new acquaintances.

"The finest fellers in the world," he exclaimed, "except for their kissin' bug. They're goin' to take you and me out to No Man's Land to-night."

"They are not," said Turner; "at least, they're not goin' to take me there."

"But you don't know what's there," said Greeley. "Don't you want to see the International Cabaret?"

Mace turned inquiringly to the ambulance driver. "Do you know anything about this?" he asked.

"No," replied the American. "There have been persistent rumors among the privates to the effect that some sort of an amusement-place has been established in an abandoned trench between the lines, but I don't know how true it is. You know, there is always some sort of a joke passing around whenever a big bunch of men get together like this, and it's always hard to tell if there's any foundation for it or not."

"How much do you know about this?" Mace asked of Greeley.

Greeley's reply consisted principally of nods and winks and grimaces, but he finished by saying:

"You've got a chance to know all about it, if you've got your nerve with you. We're starting at midnight."

The officer doubted so strongly the ability of the soldiers to conduct him and Greeley beyond their own first-line trenches that he went with them without hesitation when they left on their midnight excursion. He thought it was undoubtedly a hoax—some kind of a harmless joke, which would result only in a hearty laugh all around.

Following a road which led to the eastward, they crossed several miles of level country, making frequent detours into the fields to get past the sentry posts.

Once they were halted, but by the freemasonry of comradeship their conductors were able to extricate themselves and their guests from the clutches of martial law.

After traveling four or five miles in this way they left the main road, followed a lane for a mile or so to the north, and entered a wood. Dropping to their hands and knees, they crawled a short distance toward a dull glow, which indicated that a campfire was burning before them. The Frenchmen left them for a few moments, and they heard a suppressed conversation. Then their guides returned and boldly conducted them into the trenches.

In a well-furnished dug-out they changed their yachting uniforms for those of the French infantry. Then they sallied forth and, following the two soldiers, pushed their way past lines of soldiers, ever on the alert.

Presently the soldier in the lead passed something back to the two Americans. Turner started as he saw that it was a hideous mask. The Frenchman looked around and indicated by gestures that this should be held in readiness for instant use, and for the first time the detective realized that he was actually entering the danger zone.

Silently now they slipped along. The trenches zigzagged in such a way that he could not tell precisely what general direction they were following. He understood perfectly, however. When, as they were about to leave a narrow connecting trench to enter a wider, deeper one, a hand-grenade exploded and a soldier dropped his rifle and went limping into a dug-out. They had reached the first line.

The guide who was in the lead smiled grimly back at him and shook his head. He showed no sign of fear, but seemed to take the incident as a matter of course. Turner remembered the stories which he had heard from the front, all of which were to the effect that however many casualties a soldier may witness, he seldom, if ever, thinks of himself as figuring in one.

From out the dug-out came a *poilu* with a grenade in each hand. In quick succession he heaved them over and listened for the reports. Then he stepped into the door of the dug-out and watched expectantly. Second after second passed and nothing came back. He smiled and said something to his comrade, who had been wounded by the first grenade. Mace looked at his guide inquiringly. The man shrugged his shoulders and threw up his hands in that peculiar French gesture which may mean any one of a number of things. In this case it probably meant that the Boches were out of ammunition.

Waiting a few seconds to see if there was to be a renewal of the attack, the Frenchman motioned to his followers to come along rapidly, took them a few yards through the trench, and into a dug-out.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

NO MAN'S LAND

THE soldier seemed to be well known to the few men inside. After laughing and joking for a few moments they pulled aside a piece of burlap and entered a tunnel, which seemed to lead directly in the direction of the enemy's lines. Turner felt by this time that it was a foolhardy expedition, yet he did not like to show the white feather, so he followed on. Greeley seemed to have no fears. With a grin on his weather-beaten face he took in everything which he passed, and looked forward to seeing more.

About a hundred yards from where they had entered the tunnel they suddenly came out into the open air. At that instant a fusillade started somewhere in the immediate vicinity. The drumming of the machine-guns was so near and some of the bullets seemed to pass so closely over his head that the detective crouched down close to the earth.

The Frenchman laughed, and, raising his forefinger, waved it in a wide circle above his head. The detective followed it with his eyes and discovered what he had not noticed before, that they were in a shell crater—a great hole scooped out by the explosion of a projectile of the largest caliber.

A well-beaten path led through the center of it, and at the further side the tunnel began again. Following this for about the same distance which they had traversed on the other side of the crater, they came out into a trench similar to the one where they had seen the grenade encounter, except that it was void of either guns or ammunition.

It was broad and deep. The entrances to the dug-outs, which were as close together as houses on a city street, were decorated with bunting and lighted with candle lanterns. There was music in the air.

Peering curiously through the first open door, Mace and Greeley saw a strange sight. There were as many German uniforms as French, bottles of wine and steins of beer, not to mention food in great variety. There were women, too.

Their French guides motioned to Turner and Greeley to enter. They went in, but only for a moment. Even the sailor, who could not be called finicky, soon had enough. The Frenchmen seemed to understand the situation. It seemed to remind them that they, too, had once come fresh from the refinements of home.

However, they seemed bent upon showing their American friends the whole show. *"Les officiers!"* they kept saying as they led them on.

At the door of the last dug-out they laid their fingers on their lips, as a sign of silence, and drew aside the curtain just far enough to permit their guests to see the interior through a narrow slit.

It was a small room. In the rear was a sort of alcove with a table just large enough for two. It was but dimly lighted. In the foreground the detective saw, to his surprise, the owner of the *Carissima*. A curtain hung before the alcove. He could see a German officer on one side of the table talking earnestly with some one on the other side, who was concealed by the curtain.

That the German was flushed with wine was plain to be seen. That his companion was of the gentler sex became apparent when he suddenly reached across, seized a fair hand, and forced it to his lips. The police officer heard an exclamation in a voice, which he well knew. He put his hand to his pocket and groaned to find that he had left his gun in his own clothes.

"Mr. Persley, help me, please!" cried Hilda.

"Hush, my dear!" commanded the banker. "The gentleman means no harm. You must make yourself agreeable."

The German officer appeared not to understand English. He dropped her hand for a moment, but soon rose and upset the table in an effort to secure it again.

Bursting through the curtain, Hilda ran, wild-eyed, for the door, closely pursued by the flushed, infuriated brute. They passed Persley before he could gain his feet.

Turner brushed aside the curtain to give her easy exit, and met the German's nose with a very stolid fist. As the officer struck the ground, with the back of his neck at Persley's feet, the detective turned and ran after Hilda, who was just entering the tunnel.

Swiftly they ran through the darkness. In a few moments they reached the crater, Mace having gained enough to enter it before she had gained the opposite side. As he emerged into the starlight he lost his footing and stumbled. Quickly regaining his feet, he was about to enter the tunnel at the opposite side, when he heard earth rolling down the sides of the crater. Looking up, he saw a flash of white, and instantly realized that she had scrambled up the side to flee across the open country.

The awful peril of the situation flashed across his mind even before the machine-guns began their drumming. He knew that they were in No Man's Land, and that any moving object in that desolate waste between the trenches immediately attracts to itself the fire of every gun within range.

Like a tiger he sprang up the sloping side of the crater. The loose earth crumbled beneath his feet, and he slipped repeatedly, but he drove his fingers into the soil and climbed on. At the rim he paused for an instant and strained his eyes into the darkness. He could see nothing. Had she already been mowed down by the merciless hail of lead?

The gunners were evidently satisfied, for the volley ceased. Taking advantage of the pause, he made a dash in the direction which he had seen her take. Before he had gone a dozen paces, there came a deafening roar from both sides, and something seemed to strike him with the force of a sledge-hammer. The ground gave way beneath him, and he slid down, down, down, until he sank away into oblivion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SYMPATHY

TURNER seemed to wander for ages through labyrinths in which wild beasts pursued him and thorns pierced his flesh. Times without number, lions, tigers and crocodiles seemed about to devour him, when a sweet, commanding voice would drive them away—and still his pain.

At one of these miraculous rescues—about the millionth one, it seemed to him—he opened his eyes. Above him a gray sky was reddening at the approach of the morning sun. His horizon seemed strangely limited, but as his mind became clearer he saw that he was lying at the bottom of a crater similar to the one out of which he had climbed in pursuit of Hilda.

He shuddered as he thought of her lying out there, with her sightless eyes turned mutely upward.

He tried to rise, but sank back with a groan. From behind him came the sound of a stifled sob. A fierce joy rolled over him, but he lay with his eyes closed, fearful lest he should frighten her.

No other sound caught his ear for a long time. He raised his lids just a trifle—not far enough for her to realize that his eyes were open. There was something soft beneath his head. The dirt which he felt sure he must have accumulated in climbing out of one crater and falling into another had been carefully brushed from his clothes, and his hands had been washed with a filmy handkerchief, which was now spread out to dry on a stone.

He longed to hear her voice again, but feared that if he spoke he would frighten her, so he repeated intentionally what he had done unconsciously before. He writhed and groaned.

A soft hand was laid upon his brow. He thrilled beneath its touch, and his hands twitched to possess it, but he knew he must be discreet.

He groaned again, louder this time. She stroked his face and laid a velvety cheek upon his tangled locks.

For a few moments he lay still. Believing him to be unconscious, she gradually discontinued the stroking and removed her head from his.

"Oh, you poor man, poor man!" she sobbed. "And you did it to save me!" Overcome with the long-sustained tension, she buried her face in his coat and sobbed as though her heart would break.

Mace realized suddenly that he was taking an unfair advantage, but he could not bring himself to part with those brown ringlets, which, tangled though they were and wet, were yet so adorably lovely. Raising both his hands, he stroked her tresses tenderly.

The sobs instantly ceased. She placed her hands upon his, took his hands away, raised her head, and looked into his eyes.

Turner reveled in the brown depths for a moment, then raised his arms to place his hands upon her shoulders. Lightly as a gazelle she sprang away. "You're just pretending," she said accusingly.

"No, I'm not," he declared. "I bet I can find blood on me, if I was hit where I can see it."

"Only a scratch," said Hilda. "I found that out; but you've a bump on your head. You must have struck a rock when you tumbled into the crater."

"And what about you?" inquired the detective anxiously.

"Oh, I'm all right," declared Hilda.

"What made you come out of the crater?" he asked. "Why didn't you keep on until you reached the French trenches?"

"I was so frightened, I think, I must have lost my way," she answered. "That terrible German! What became of him?"

The officer examined his fist, noting with satisfaction that the knuckles were slightly split. "I think likely you would find him right where he fell," he replied proudly.

"It was so good of you." Turner's heart was like wax before her words of appreciation. He felt so little anxiety to get out of his present situation that he did not even try to evolve a plan of escape.

Hilda, however, had no intention of remaining in the pit any longer than necessary. "Do you think it is safe to stay here?" she asked.

"Much safer than trying to run away in broad daylight," he replied. "No two of these big shells ever strike in exactly the same place. If we were in the water now, no doubt you would quickly give us all the slip."

"Perhaps," she said roguishly.

"And you have a most unaccountable way of disappearing from a railway train," he added.

"Yes?" She looked away with a smile.

"And how do you go home from the bank?"

She gave him one startled look, snatched up her handkerchief from the stone where it had been spread to dry, attached it to the end of a stick, and waved it above the edge of the crater.

Instantly there came a shout from the German trenches which was echoed from the French. Turner could not understand what the words meant, but evidently Hilda did. "Come along; hurry!" she said as she climbed the bank. The detective followed, and experienced the strange sensation of walking unharmed between the lines of two of the deadliest armies the world has ever produced.

"Let's see; it was this way, wasn't it?" she asked, starting northward.

"No, we came from the south," replied the officer, leading her in the opposite direction. "That is our crater over there."

He helped her over the edge, but could not resist the temptation to linger for a moment to inspect No Man's Land by daylight. That moment came near being his undoing. Hilda, with a quick jerk, pulled him off his balance and into the crater, just in time to save him from a murderous machine-gun fire from the German trenches.

Turner gritted his teeth. "Were the devils shooting at me?" he inquired.

"The officer who insulted me last night is evidently still in charge of this section of the trenches," replied Hilda. "It takes some of you men so long to realize what war is."

"What is that queer place where we were last night?" he asked as he escorted her through the tunnel toward the French lines. "How did you happen to be there?"

Hilda picked her way along in the darkness without replying, and Mace thought she had not heard him. He said no more until he had passed the first-line trenches, where he was joined by Greeley with expressions of relief, and was well out of the danger zone.

"Devilish queer place that amusement-hall, or whatever it is out between the lines," he began again. "I have often heard that the men in the trenches had no personal animosity toward each other, and that they would fraternize at every opportunity, but how in the world do they manage to conduct such a place, visited by officers and men from both sides?"

"Do you think it is going to rain?" asked Hilda as innocently as a child.

Turner shut up like a clam and withdrew into a reserve from which Greeley was unable to draw him for many an hour.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

THE more Mace Turner thought of the cabaret in No Man's Land the more he wondered that such a place could exist. It seemed strange, too, that Persley should take his secretary through such hazards as he must have known existed there.

He did not wonder so much that Hilda had been able, by waving her handkerchief, to establish a momentary truce. Any body of soldiers on earth would cease firing from sheer astonishment, if for no other reason, under such circumstances; but Hilda had shown a confidence which seemed to speak of a knowledge of some prearranged understanding.

He was tempted to report the affair to the division commander of the French forces, but he hesitated to do so, because such a report would involve in an investigation those who had shown him the place out of courtesy and good will.

Hearing of an older man in his own line of work, a chief of police in a city several miles behind the lines, he decided to go to him and seek his advice.

The detective was cordially received, and learned immediately that the man whose advice he was seeking spoke English quite fluently. He laid the case frankly before him.

The old Frenchman sat for a long time, looking thoughtfully out of the window before he replied. At last he turned, and, handing back Turner's credentials, which he had been holding in his hand, he said:

"My boy, you are a conscientious worker, and I want to be careful that I make myself understood and do not plant in your mind the germs of any of the rabid, irrational beliefs which lead men to revolution and anarchy; but sooner or later you must come to know that there are in all governments, and operating between all governments, certain intangible, mysterious forces which the ordinary citizen can only guess at.

"If you have read the history of your country you will recall that at the close of the bloodiest day's fighting at the battle of Gettysburg—before the victory had been decided—men from both armies mingled freely about Spanglers Spring. They laughed and joked together, they swapped coffee and tobacco, they were as friendly as though engaged in peaceful pursuits. The officers did not interfere with them, and in fact, met together there themselves.

"Obviously, this sort of thing could not have been carried very far. There were certain great principles to be decided through the grim medium of war; and yet, those in authority recognized for the moment the universal brotherhood of man, and permitted military discipline to relax and the rank and file to enjoy the privilege of drinking a cooling draught entirely free from that tension which puts every soldier to a terrific strain so long as he is under fire.

"The same sort of thing is happening out yonder where you were the other night, in all probability. Men cannot live constantly in the presence of death; they cannot endure the roar of the guns, the thought that they are hunting each other like wild beasts, unless they have their moments of relaxation. Every commander strives to keep the morale of his command up to the highest possible standard, and on the face of it it looks as though this sort

of thing would be destructive of that morale. Every commander realizes, however, that men must and will have their bit of fun, and he does not scrutinize too closely the means by which they find their relaxation. Talk with the men when the war is over, and you will find that there has been many a friendly conference between Frenchman and Teuton on the solitary outposts, and probably not a few gathering-places, such as you have discovered, between the lines. All of which did not tend to prevent their doing their level best to overcome each other in each day's fighting."

"But this thing looks positively dangerous for both sides," exclaimed Turner. "What is to prevent the leakage of important military secrets?"

"Nothing," said the chief of police, "nothing, except a gentlemen's understanding that the place is neutral ground and that any intercourse that may be carried on there shall be held sacredly secret."

"But is it?"

Again the old man smiled grimly. "Usually it is," he replied; "but as you know, among rich and poor there is an occasional traitor who cannot be trusted by friend or foe. Sometimes he is the low fellow who hangs about, ready to sell his very soul for a glass of cognac; sometimes he is the man higher up—possibly a multimillionaire—plotting, scheming, overthrowing governments themselves."

Turner suddenly started forward. His hands tightly gripped the arm of his chair and his eyes gazed fixedly at his aged advisor. "Did you ever hear of a capitalist named Richard Persley?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the Frenchman; "he is well known in our country."

"What would you say if I were to tell you that he was in this cabaret in No Man's Land, hobnobbing with German officers?"

The old man raised his brows in surprise, but did not reply at once.

"And that he had with him, apparently as a tool, a young woman as beautiful as an angel and as mysterious as she is beautiful?"

The old man measured his words as he replied:

"I would say, my boy, that unless I had very urgent business on this side of the Atlantic, and unless I felt quite sure of this gentleman's friendship, I would return to America by the first boat."

"But you wouldn't desert——"

The chief of police raised his eyebrows again, this time with an expression in which indulgence and anxiety mingled. "Of course, if a consideration of a personal nature should enter into the matter," he replied, "the question would have to be decided on personal grounds. It might come to be a choice between your obligation, if any, to the young woman and your obligation to protect your own interests."

The air of determination which Turner wore as he took leave of his counselor left no room for doubt as to his course of action. He returned to the camp, and with the help of his trusted friend Greeley, transmitted a note to Hilda:

"My Dear Miss Hornsten—Please forgive me if I seem to be presuming to take advantage of the accident which literally threw us together the other evening.

"I really have no intention of doing so, but I feel that I must ask for an interview.

"What I have to say to you concerns your brother, whom, I understand, you expected to meet in France, but whom you have not yet seen. The Man of the Crater."

The response was immediate. Miss Hornsten was so ready to see him that she was willing to suit his own convenience as to the time and place. Taking Greeley with him, he went that very evening to a tree near the camp, which he had designated for the conference, and found her already waiting there with a Frenchwoman as an attendant.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

WHEN THE MOON IS RED

"I DON'T like this business," said Greeley in a whisper, before they came close enough to Hilda and her companion to be heard. "I am not superstitious, but I'm always keerful when the moon looks like it does to-night."

"What's the matter with the moon?" asked Turner, who had been admiring it as it rose in splendor in the eastern sky.

"Can't you see it's red?" said Greeley testily.

"Of course it's red," answered Mace. "How could it be otherwise when the air is so full of smoke as it is along the battlefront?"

"I tell you it's a bad sign."

"If you keep on I shall suspect you are jealous."

Greeley said no more. The detective, graciously received by Hilda, withdrew a few paces with her, and entered directly into the matter which he wanted to discuss.

"Miss Hornsten," he said, "you are the most mysterious person I have ever met."

She laughed. "You are not exactly an open book yourself," she replied. "I know you have been following me ever since the day you first saw me back home, out there by the island."

"I dare say I am not the only one who has sought your acquaintance," he ventured.

"Men are such funny creatures," she responded.

"Really now, Miss Hornsten, you can't blame a fellow, can you? We are all human, you know, and in the presence of such perfection——"

"Oh, come down to earth," she interrupted. "You said in your note that you wanted to see me about my brother."

Turner was somewhat hurt to have his compliments cut off so ruthlessly. In a business-like manner he proceeded:

"I have always been sorry that I permitted you to approach so near that disagreeable object that day at Dolphin Island."

"It couldn't be helped," said she.

"That cadaver led me into one of the most profound mysteries in which I have ever become involved," he continued.

"Have you solved it?" she asked.

"Far from it. I can't say positively that I have even a clue yet."

"You talk like a detective," said Hilda.

"That is my profession," responded Turner, "and my interest in the case is a professional one."

"I heard the people at the beach talking about a murder," said Hilda with a little shiver, "but I don't like to hear about such things. I wouldn't listen."

"I don't blame you; it is not a pleasant topic of conversation. However, it must be discussed by some one in order to arrive at the facts."

"Let's not talk about it any more," said Hilda. "You said you wanted to see me about my brother."

"Where is he?"

"Somewhere in France," she replied. "I am expecting him every day."

"What does he look like?" He pitied her as he led her up to the shock that he knew he must give her.

She described her brother, much as the ambulance driver had done, adding some details, which only a relative would have thought of.

"An acquaintance whom I met here upon my arrival told me that your brother left very suddenly some time ago."

"Very likely. Soldiers are subject to sudden calls."

"Do you know where he went from here?"

"You make me uneasy with all this questioning," said Hilda, looking at him anxiously. "If you know anything concerning him, please tell me."

The nearer the detective approached the disclosure of his suspicions, the harder he found it to come to the point. "Have you ever felt any uneasiness about your brother?" he asked evasively.

"Why, of course; when one has a brother in the army

one cannot help thinking of all the dreadful things which might happen."

"But has your uneasiness always been associated alone with the perils of war?"

"You ask such strange questions," she said piteously. "You seem to be trying to drag from me the very secrets of my heart."

"Miss Hornsten," said Mace earnestly, "you compel me to confess a secret which may seem very strange and foolish to you. It is that sometimes I have seemed to feel that your heart was speaking to mine—even before I saw you, I repeatedly heard, or felt, some one appealing to me for help through the medium of telepathy, or thought-transference. Was it you?"

She placed her hands over her lips to stifle a cry. "You are—you are—Mr. Turner?" she quavered.

As he opened his lips to reply he was struck by the blood-red appearance which everything about him had assumed. The moonlight filtered through the leaves and fell upon them in a crimson flood. A harsh, choking voice broke the stillness as he hesitated, commanding Hilda to stand aside. Mace caught the gleam of a weapon, and sprang back, drawing the girl with him. There came a flash and a whiz of a bullet. There was no sharp report, only the muffled sound which comes from a revolver to which a silencer has been attached.

"Greeley, quick!" he called.

The sailor came bounding through the grass, but before he reached his side, Hilda and her companion had disappeared.

Turner and Greeley courageously started out to search the neighborhood, but it seemed as though the very powers of darkness had suddenly turned against them. By whatever avenue they attempted to enter the camp they were halted by some missile, whose potentiality was no less deadly because of its silence.

At last, believing prudence to be the better part of valor, they concealed themselves and waited for the dawn. When it came, they were received in camp as cordially as before, but the most earnest inquiry failed to reveal anything whatever concerning the whereabouts of Richard Persley and Hilda Hornsten.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A NEW BEGINNING

THE surest way of finding Persley and Hilda again was to go back to the harbor where the yacht lay, Turner decided.

Before he started he had the official records searched to see if anything more was known concerning Hornsten than was contained in the rumors about him. The records simply had him listed among the missing, with no explanation whatsoever.

When the detective and Greeley reached the port they found that the yacht had sailed. An attempt to secure accurate information concerning her failed, but by making inquiries along the waterfront they learned that she had left her pier and anchored well out in the harbor the afternoon before, and had evidently slipped away in the night.

No one had seen the owner and his secretary go aboard. Turner satisfied himself that they had not embarked at the pier, but it would have been possible for them to go out to the *Carissima* in a launch after dark.

If he had been sure that Hilda needed or wanted him, and that she was still on European soil, he would have remained to serve her at all hazards; but after weighing all the probabilities in the case, he decided that the chances were very much in favor of her reaching America as soon as he could, or sooner.

Owing to the unexpected manner in which he had left his native land, he had not been prepared to meet the expense of a long journey. He was under the necessity therefore of sending a cable for money. Going to the telegraph office, he wrote out his message. On account of the censorship regulations this had to be written out in full, passed upon and put into code in a government office, and then returned for transmission.

To make sure that the French officials had properly translated and coded the message, he asked for the privilege of checking it up. He found that the sense of the message had been utterly destroyed.

In order to save time he sent Greeley out to look up sailing and accommodations, while he wrestled with the cable problem. It was well that he did so, for the more he tried to straighten out his cablegram the more he became involved.

When Greeley returned at the end of two hours he found Turner in a state of exasperation and controlling himself only because it had been borne in upon him that trouble had been planted for him at the cable office before he arrived.

"We can sail on one of the French Line boats, provided we are at the pier in half an hour," announced Greeley, out of breath.

"And if we don't catch her?" inquired Mace.

"Nothing doing for another week."

"I don't suppose we can get aboard without money."

"Yes, we can," answered Greeley. "I thought you might have trouble with these men, so I fixed it two ways."

"We're not going to stow away again?"

"Worse than that," replied Greeley; "but we can't stand here arguing about it, or we will loose the ship. It will take a taxi to get us there, as it is."

Without waiting to say the things to the cable officials which he was longing to say, the detective rushed out with the sailor and hailed a taxi. "To the French Line, quick!" he commanded.

The chauffeur looked at him stupidly. *"Qu'est que c'est?"* he asked.

Turner was in a mood to commit murder, and if Greeley had not promptly taken charge of the situation there is no telling what might have happened. Vaulting into the seat beside the chauffeur, he yelled:

"Start this tin Lizzie, or I'll throw you out an' run over you!"

The chauffeur did not understand English, but he gathered from the sailor's gestures that what was desired was plenty of gas and an open cut-out. He followed the direction pointed out by Greeley, and landed them at the pier just after the gangplanks had been drawn in and the hawsers which held the steamer in her berth had been cast off to allow her to start her voyage to the westward.

Turner threw his last piece of change at the chauffeur and sprinted after Greeley, who headed not for the place where the passenger gangplank had been but for another opening through which cargo was received and discharged. The sailor walked out on a narrow stringpiece, and the detective followed.

The distance between the pier and the vessel was not great, but it was too far to jump. "Pass me a line, will you, please, Buddy?" implored Greeley of a seaman who was pulling in a hawser. "We belong to the crew."

The fellow obligingly swung the line within reach. "You go first," said Greeley, putting the rope in Turner's hands, but holding the end himself.

The officer swung across the water, landed with his feet against the side of the vessel, and pulled himself up to the deck. Greeley followed.

"I'll do as much for you some time," said Greeley to the seaman, and Mace added his cordial thanks.

"Dunno how you'll like the job I got for you," said Greeley, starting down a companionway.

"I'm so glad to be on the way back that I'm willing to do almost anything."

"But this ain't a nice clean job," said Greeley dubiously, going lower and lower into the bowels of the ship.

"Well, what is it?"

"Stokin'," said Greeley.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed the detective.

"No, it won't be holy smoke," Greeley answered. "It'll just be smoke—thick, black, greasy smoke."

A week later they emerged, weary, blistered and begrimed. The passengers left the ship first, of course. Turner, with his trained powers of observation, was quick to note as he reached the exit that two men, who had evidently arrived on the ship, had lingered there instead of immediately leaving after the customs inspection, as every one else had done.

Taking pains to appear as much like a regular stoker as possible, he watched them for a few minutes. They went back into the room where the customs officials had been at work, but immediately came out again. "Everybody's ashore," he heard one of them say. "There is no doubt that the scheme worked. He is stranded on the other side, and everybody is safe for another week at least."

He followed them, and in doing so passed through streets with which he was now well familiar. They went straight to the side entrance of the International Bank. Turner slouched past the door as they were being greeted with eager questioning by the bank president and his secretary.

Without waiting to change his clothes he went to the inspector's office. That official did not recognize him immediately, and he was anything but enthusiastic when he did.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Somewhere in France," replied Turner.

"Did you have orders to go to Europe?"

"I had orders to continue my investigation of this case until I had reached the bottom of it."

"I had no intention of authorizing you to leave the country."

"It was entirely unintentional, sir."

"Did you find anything?"

"Not much that would serve as evidence."

"Well, it's time to give up this wild-goose chase."

"What!" exclaimed Turner. "Give up after spending all this time and trouble? Surely, you cannot ask me to do that?"

"I do not ask it, I command it," said the inspector coldly.

The detective was amazed at this startling turn of affairs, but as he sat back in his chair and looked the inspector in the eye his fighting spirit rose. He stood up and said with dignity:

"If that is your command then I must decline to execute it. Accept my resignation. I am in this case to stay."

The inspector seemed surprised. "You've had a good record, Turner," he said. "Hadn't you better take time to think before you do anything so rash?"

"No, my mind is made up," declared the officer. "I don't know who it is that committed the murder which started me on this case. I don't know who it is that turned the whole of France against me in a day. I don't know who it is that has tried to undermine my reputation with you and is trying to force me to leave this mystery unsolved, but I say to you, Mr. Inspector, that somewhere there is a man higher up, and that I am going to get him if it is the last thing I do on earth."

The inspector looked startled. "Let's get down to brass tacks on this matter, Turner," he said. "Do you mean to say that I have been influenced in this matter?"

"Well, what else can I think?" said the detective. "You started me out with an order to go to the bottom of this thing. I come back and find you cold."

"Well, if you've got anything, even a theory, let's have it," said the inspector.

"I've only this," said Turner, "the fact that the body of a murdered man came ashore on Dolphin Island two months ago; the fact that a girl, who is either an angel or a devil, has connected herself with the case, in my mind, through telepathic influence; the fact that she is in league with, or under the control of, a man, or a group of men, or a system, assuming the power of life and death over innocent people. I'm going to smash that man, or that group of men, or that system, whatever it is, with the help of you and your department, or without it. If necessary, I am ready to go it alone and take the consequences."

Pulling the curtain back a little, Mace saw a room in which were both German and French officers sitting at a table.

The inspector listened to every word with the closest attention. As Mace finished, he looked thoughtfully out of the window for a few moments, then suddenly wheeled and grasped the detective by the hand. "I'm beginning to see some things that I never saw before," he said. "I'm afraid you've taken a pretty large contract; but between the invisible government which rules as it will without respect for any man's rights, and a man who has the courage to take his life in his hands and battle for the right, an honest man can make but one choice—I'm with you."

Turner's voice was husky as he replied:

"I'm a little bit ashamed, Mr. Inspector, to think that I've been on this case two months and still just about where I was when I started; but I'm going to justify your confidence in me, or——"

He was interrupted by Greeley, who stepped in to say: "I big your pardon, boss, but those men you followed to the bank have put on false whiskers and are on your trail."

"Leave the building by the subway," said the inspector, "and until we have run this thing down, don't either of you stir without a gun."

CHAPTER TWENTY

TRAPPED

THERE could be no doubt that Greeley's statement was correct. Turner watched the two men from a window until he was sure that they were the ones whom he had shadowed to the bank.

How they had learned so soon the error of the conclusion they had drawn when they failed to find him among the passengers disembarking from the French steamer, he could not tell. It looked like collusion in the detective bureau itself, although he might have been observed, of course, by some one on the street who knew him, in spite of his unusual appearance.

Taking the inspector's advice, he and Greeley left the building by an underground passage, known only to the officers. He took Greeley with him to his apartment, where they enjoyed the luxury of baths and shaves and changes of clothing.

Greeley wanted to visit his house on the island, and as Turner wanted time to think out a plan of action, he told him to go, but to be on the lookout for enemies.

Calmly and methodically the detective reviewed the whole case and considered every possibility. To him it was like a great game. The indisputable facts, when all mere suppositions, inferences and theories had been cast aside, were as follows:

The man whose body had drifted ashore on Dolphin Island died from a stab in the back, which could scarcely have been given by accident.

He was a stranger in that section, for all the inquiries concerning him had failed to reveal one person who knew anything about him.

A person whose description was similar had mysteriously disappeared on the other side of the ocean at a time which brought it within the range of possibility that he could have crossed the Atlantic, met his death, and drifted ashore on Dolphin Island on the date on which this body was recovered.

A mysterious young woman had apparently had misgivings concerning her brother about the time of the murder, and had thought with such intensity of the detective who was now trying to unravel the mysterious web, as to transfer some of her thought to him, consciously or unconsciously, through mental telepathy. She still believed this brother to be alive in spite of her misgivings.

This young woman was employed by, and was under the influence of, a man of international reputation, who was apparently living a double life. He was connected with business interests of far-reaching influence and was known as a benefactor of charitable, philanthropic and patriotic enterprises. At the same time it seemed certain that he had at least placed himself in a position to traffic in secret of international importance, if he had not indeed bought and sold such information. He apparently had recognized in the detective a man whose activities would be extremely dangerous, and had determined to take him out of the case. In doing this he had shown his willingness to use any method, from simple assassination to organized effort, involving high government officials.

The only definite bit of evidence Turner had was the broken point of a penknife. This, if he could find the rest of the knife, might solve the mystery.

This was the case in a nutshell. An unsatisfactory case it was, from a professional point of view, since months of earnest work had failed to reveal any evidence directly connecting the persons under surveillance with the crime; but his personal interest had been keenly aroused, and professionally it was a rare chance to put himself against a foeman worthy of his steel.

He resolved to do two things—land the international spy, whether he was connected with the murder or not; and satisfy himself that Hilda was free from any taint of crime, even though her association with Persley and her mysterious tendencies at times placed her under suspicion.

A dozen schemes for accomplishing his two objects were considered and discarded. He was still pondering the matter when Greeley returned.

The sailor-man was excited. His cabin had been ransacked. Nothing had been taken, but it was an affront and indignity which he could not overlook. He might have recovered from the shock had it not been that when he went ashore to return to Mace he had been met on the beach by Hilda, and passed by with a saucy look.

This evidence that they considered him and his friend harmless was all that the detective needed to bring him to a white heat. "Greeley," he exclaimed, "we'll go after them in broad daylight and we'll get them!"

Late into the night they sat discussing ways and means. Early the next morning the detective and Greeley put on health inspectors' badges. Together they began investigating the cellars in the neighborhood of the International Bank. Turner wanted to discover how Hilda left the bank without passing through either of its doors opening on the street.

They kept a sharp lookout, feeling certain that they would be followed and watched, but they saw no one.

At last, passing through a gate and down a narrow passage between brick walls, they discovered a flight of stone steps leading down into a chamber, which did not appear to be a part of the building above it. Without the aid of his pocket-flashlight, Turner could see the interior well enough to determine that there was but one door leading from it. This door was of heavy planking and had no latch, handle or keyhole on the side on which the two men were standing.

The detective pushed. It did not yield. He carefully examined the whole door and frame for any sign of a hidden spring or catch. He found none; but when he tried the door again it swung slowly open.

If the passage beyond the door had been dark he would have hesitated to enter, but as it was well lighted by means of small windows near the ceiling, which opened into courts above, and as no person was visible, he walked in, with Greeley following.

They closed the door behind them, first ascertaining that there was a handle inside, by which it could be opened again.

It was a long passage and Mace, by mental calculation, determined that it led in the direction of the bank. "I think we have solved one mystery, at least," said he to Greeley as they approached the further end.

They found here a door similar to the one through which they had passed. Its surface and frame were smooth. Turner pushed, but without result. It was solid and immovable.

As he had done at the other door, he felt for a secret spring or catch, but there was no sign of anything of the sort. He pushed again, and Greeley also put his shoulder against the stout planks, but they would not stir. They retraced their steps down the corridor and Mace, standing on Greeley's shoulders, peered out of each of the windows. Nothing could be seen but blank walls.

"Let us go out again and see if we can find any other approach to the bank," said the officer. He took hold of the latch of the door which they had entered, and pulled. The door did not open. He pulled more vigorously, but with no better result. Taking the latch in both hands, he braced one foot against the frame and tried with all his might to open the door. His hand slipped off, and had it not been for Greeley he would have fallen heavily.

"Trapped!" exclaimed Greeley.

"Let's try the other door again."

On tiptoe they went back to the other end of the corridor. Everything there was as they had found it before, except that the air was full of the sickening odor of illuminating gas.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A CAPTAIN OF FINANCE

MACE TURNER took out his handkerchief, wet the center of it in his mouth, and tied it over his face in such a way that the wet portion was directly in front of his nostrils. Greeley immediately caught the idea and followed his example. It was the only substitute available for the gas mask.

Several times they went from end to end of the corridor, trying the doors and attempting to find some means for opening them. The detective had a pocket tool kit, but although it contained an assortment of small saws and chisels there was nothing with which he could by any possibility cut through the heavy doors before they would die of suffocation.

The gas was coming from a pipe, to which a fixture should have been attached. If there had ever been a gasolier there it had been removed. Unfortunately, the end of the pipe did not extend through the ceiling. If it had been within reach it would have been an easy matter to plug it, but it was located in a hole of considerable depth, and too small to permit the passage of a hand.

By standing upon Greeley's shoulders the detective was able to fasten a handkerchief over the opening, which retarded to some extent the inflow of gas, but enough still entered to make their situation exceedingly dangerous.

"I've a notion to touch a match to it," said Greeley.

"And blow us both into smithereens?" asked the officer in a muffled voice through his handkerchief.

Mace spanned the glass and the next instant Greeley heard a glass-cutter zip its way around the four sides of the pane. "Here, take this," said the detective, handing it down. "I don't want it to fall on the outside."

Greeley took the glass and, after Mace had descended, deposited it on the floor. "Whew!" he said, "I'm glad we've got some ventilation."

"It will help a little, but as the draught through the window will draw the gas up from the floor, where, being lighter than air, it will lie if undisturbed, we will have it with us while we are trying to squeeze out through the window."

"Can't you take out the frame, too?" asked Greeley, rubbing his broad shoulder as though afraid that they would have to be trimmed down before they were forced through the narrow opening.

"Do the step-ladder stunt again," said Turner, "and I'll see how the land lays."

Again the sailor bowed his back. The detective climbed to his shoulders and cautiously poked his head through the window. In a minute he drew it in again and jumped down. "I don't want to take out that sash if I can help it," he said. "This row of windows is below the level of the ground. They open into a hollow area, such as you often see outside cellars or basements. This area runs all the way along to the bank building, which begins about where the door in the end of this corridor is. Right above the end of the area is a window. As I remember the interior of the bank, this window is in the president's office."

"If the president sees us crawling out of this hole, good-night!" said Greeley.

"That's just it," said Mace. "The fastenings of this sash are on the outside. In order to take out the screws I would have to put my arms through and work for some time, which would increase our chances of getting caught. If we can slip through the opening one at a time and crawl to the end of the area we may be able to get underneath the president's window unobserved. Then we will be able to see from behind a blind how a bank president acts when he thinks that he is alone."

"I hope you didn't think that we could go through that rat-hole two at a time," said Greeley.

"You'd have your joke if you were going to be hung," laughed the sleuth. "Now, do you want to go first, or will you yield me the place of honor?"

"I'd like to walk on you for a change," replied Greeley, "and I'd like to go first, if it wasn't for one thing. Something might happen in that minute while I was crawling through, and before you got in range of the window, and which you, being a detective, ought to see; so if you want to take the lead I'll let you this time; but when you get ready to plunk that banker I claim the privilige of firin' the first shot."

"Get him alive! Get him alive! That's the game. I want the fun of seeing him on the grill before a federal court," said Turner.

"Well, let's get at it," said Greeley. "Up you go."

Turner sprang lightly up his human ladder, thrust his arms and head through the window and with a powerful, wriggling motion pulled himself through. Greeley waited until the detective's hands beckoned him to follow, and then with a short run and a leap caught the sash.

Pulling himself up, he poked his head through. Mace was lying on his stomach outside the window. "Come on, quick!" he whispered.

"I can't. My shoulders won't go through," replied Greeley, after a lunge.

"Put your left hand and arm out," directed Mace.

Holding fast with his right hand and crowding his head as far to the right as possible, the sailor managed to work his hand through the opening. Turner grasped his arm, and Greeley, crowding his bulk toward the left of the sash, forced his right arm out.

"Jiminy crickets," he groaned, "it's cutting me in two."

"Hurry," urged Mace, "there's some one stirring inside the office."

Kicking and grunting, the sailor worked his way inch by inch until, his hips safely through the window, he made a final drive and lay panting on his stomach.

"Into the corner!" exclaimed the officer, setting the example.

Greeley edged over and the two lay perfectly quiet as a feminine form approached the window. Both felt sure that they were discovered; but Hilda, who looked out, turned her gaze skyward instead of earthward.

Turner involuntarily drew a deep breath. As the girlish figure turned away he heard a heavy sigh behind him. Raising his head slightly, he began crawling ahead by putting one arm over the other and working his knees. He heard Greeley following.

So cautiously did the pair move that it took ten minutes to cover the twenty feet between the window in the corridor and the one in the president's office; but at last they reached their goal.

One on each side they rose, silently swung the heavy iron shutters out from the wall far enough so that they could stand behind them, and obtained a view of the interior.

The banker was dictating to his secretary. From time to time he stopped and smiled malignly, as though thinking of something other than the business in hand.

Presently he arose and came to the window. He unfastened the catch and raised the lower sash, looking out toward the row of little windows that lighted the corridor which the detective and his companion had just left.

The two men held their breaths lest he should hear them. Apparently he was short-sighted, for he squinted slightly. After a moment he sniffed. "Do you smell gas?" he asked, turning to Hilda.

Underneath the opposite blind Turner caught sight of a fist like a sledge-hammer, with the knuckles white from the strength with which it was clenched. Fortunately, the banker left the window at the moment—fortunately, for there is no doubt that in another moment that fist would have swung out of its hiding-place and landed on the banker's jaw.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TELEPATHY AT SHORT RANGE

INTENTLY Turner studied the expressions of the two persons before him. The banker was deliberate in speech and action, always weighing his words, frequently going back to correct what he had dictated.

Through the open window it was perfectly easy to hear what he was saying. The letters were addressed to officers of many of the largest corporations in the United States. Most of them had to do with investment securities, but not a few dealt with the manufacture and sale of munitions of war. Now and then there would be a personal note couched in enigmatical phrases. Turner felt sure that these were intended to convey to enemy aliens information which was carefully concealed from the eyes of persons who did not have the key to the interpretation.

Turner remembered what the inspector had read him from the volume of mental telepathy. He wondered if he would be able to influence her thought at this short range.

Fixing his gaze upon her, he concentrated his mind upon this question, "Where is your brother?" She was taking dictation at the moment, and until her employer stopped.

she showed no sign; but when he stopped to read a long letter and for a minute or two left her unoccupied, she suddenly gave a little jump, as though something had startled her, and looked about.

Turner maintained his concentration of thought and kept his eyes fixed upon her. Her eyes began to redden. In a moment a tear welled out. She wiped it away with her handkerchief as the banker looked at her sharply.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked.

"No, sir; nothing at all," she replied. "Let us go right on and finish the mail."

The success of the experiment pleased Turner, although her tears troubled him. He tried again. "Open the door to the underground passage," was his next mental suggestion.

At last the banker went to his files and was busy for some time. She left the room hurriedly and was gone for several minutes. When she came back, she said nervously, but in a low tone:

"The door to the secret corridor is fastened, and I can't get it open. There is a strong smell of gas about it."

Before the banker turned, Mace caught a glimpse of that same evil smile, but when he faced Hilda it was with an inquiring expression, which showed no guilt. "Is that so?" he inquired. "I will send for a plumber; perhaps there is a leak."

He left the room, and Hilda turned to her machine, but instead of transcribing her notes she lay her head upon it. Turner could see her shoulders heaving, and several times he thought she shuddered. Forgetting for the moment his desire to influence her thought, he gave himself up to pity and compassion. Before he realized the change in his own thoughts, she wheeled about defiantly, shook her curls, wiped her eyes, powdered her nose, and set about straightening the piles of correspondence on the desk.

The banker returned. "Did you discover the leak?" inquired Hilda.

"I declare, I forgot all about it," said he. "There were several people waiting for me outside, and I forgot all about it. You must not go out that way until I have it attended to."

Shortly after that the banker went out to lunch, and Hilda soon followed. A minute after the door closed behind her, Turner said softly:

"Come on, old man, this is our chance." They climbed through the window.

Turner went to the door first and snapped the lock. "If anybody comes we can make our getaway while they are finding their key," he said.

Quickly he began going through the files. One big section was filled with correspondence such as the banker had been working on that morning. The detective merely glanced through this. Underneath these were some wide, low filing-cases, labeled "Maps." The detective pulled out a drawer and looked at one map after another with deepest interest. "See here, Greeley," said he, "you're used to reading charts, tell me what you make of these."

Greeley removed the maps from the drawer and spread them out on the floor. "The old geezer has got the world pretty well charted," he said. "With these things in the chart-room, I reckon I could find my way most anywhere. He has specialized on fortifications, and he's even got details of the mining of the principal harbors. Any nation on earth would either pay him good money for these things or hang him for having them."

"Well, put them back," said Mace. "We don't want him to come back and find them spread out on the floor. Now I'll go through his desk."

"Not unless you have a key," said Greeley, after giving one drawer after another a vigorous but ineffective pull.

"Oh, yes I will," insisted Turner, getting under the desk with his pocket tool and disconnecting the locking device. "Roll-top desks are my specialty."

The release of the mechanism gave them entrance to all the drawers except one. This, locked with a key, controlled the rest when the locking mechanism was in working order, and could only be unlocked with a key.

Turner and Greeley ransacked the drawers, carefully returning the contents after inspection. The detective was disappointed to find nothing of importance in any of them.

"We'll have to force the other one," he said.

"Why don't you smash the bottom, it's made of light stuff," suggested Greeley.

"Because I am not sure that I shall find anything that will enable me to bring matters to a focus," replied Mace. "Unless I should find the knife with the broken point, I should prefer that Persley should not know that we have been here."

By careful manipulation he forced the lock without marring the desk. There were but two things in it—a revolver and a photograph. Turner pocketed the gun and studied the photograph thoughtfully. "Did you ever see that fellow?" he asked Greeley.

Greeley eyed the portrait. "H'm! light hair, round face, looks like a Swede. By George! I believe it's the fellow we picked up at Dolphin Island!" he exclaimed.

"Just what I was thinking," said Mace. "It begins to look as though we had our man. Still, this is not conclusive evidence. We must find the knife."

They looked through the drawers again, but found nothing more. "What's the next move?" asked the sailor. "We can't hang around here much longer. One or the other, or both of 'em, will soon be coming back from lunch."

Even as he spoke a hand was laid on the knob. "Did you lock this door, George?" asked Hilda's voice.

"No," replied the clerk, "and nobody has been near it. You must have sprung the lock yourself."

They heard her fumbling in her bag for the key. Turner was thinking hard, and seemed hesitating as to what to do.

The key touched the lock with a metallic click. "Back to your old position!" commanded the detective, and Greeley sprang for the window. Turner laid the photograph on Hilda's typewriter, silently closed the drawer, and vaulted through the window just as the door opened.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THERE'S MANY A SLIP

TURNER had hesitated about putting the photograph on the typewriter because he feared that it would be too great a shock for Hilda. He felt sure that it was the picture of the murdered man and that that man was her brother. On the spur of the moment he could think of no better way of verifying this theory than to leave the picture where she would find it and then watch what effect it had upon her.

It took Hilda some time to remove her hat, arrange her hair and attend to all those little feminine details which must be arranged before any stenographer can take up her work.

Turner almost regretted what he had done as he saw her approach the typewriter. She had shed tears when he had suggested, by means of mental telepathy, a question concerning her brother. Very likely she would break down when she saw his photograph.

But she did nothing of the kind. She picked up the picture, glanced at it casually and laid it aside. If it meant anything to her, she did not show it.

But whatever was lacking in excitement in this incident was supplied on the arrival of Persley. His eye fell upon the photograph almost immediately when he entered the room. His face turned crimson and then ashy pale. He started to speak, then his jaw snapped shut.

Hilda appeared not to notice his perturbation. She busied herself at the machine while he hung up his hat, put on his spectacles and seated himself at his desk.

He watched her narrowly. Presently he asked her to bring her book. "I must try again to secure information concerning your brother," he said.

"It is very good of you to do so much for us," she replied.

"It is all so mysterious," he said. "I met him over there and the very next day he disappeared. He was not among the killed or wounded, and there is no record of any prisoners being captured by the enemy in the last charge in which he participated.

"Have you found Mr. Turner, the detective who was talking with me that night at the camp when we were so strangely interrupted?" she asked.

"No," Persley replied, "my detectives traced him to the coast, but cannot find that he ever reached this country after that. But keep up your courage, little girl. In carrying out our larger plans we will undoubtedly be able to take care of our friends and relatives. It isn't everybody who has such good friends in all armies and all governments. You stand by me and help play the game and everything will be all right."

"Sometimes I wonder," she began.

He interrupted her: "I see you found your brother's picture in my drawer. I have been keeping it as a surprise for you. My detectives found it in Europe."

"My brother's picture?" asked Hilda in surprise.

"Yes, there it is over there by the typewriter."

"Why, that's not my brother," she said.

"Then why did you take it from my desk?" said he, rising.

"I didn't," said Hilda. "I found it on my typewriter."

Persley pulled out the drawer and examined the lock. "Forced!" he exclaimed. Jumping up, he ran to the map file. He pulled out the drawer and rapidly looked through its contents. "All disarranged!" he declared, wheeling and facing her.

Hilda looked alarmed.

Persley pressed a button on his desk and George, the clerk, appeared. "George, who was in this room while I was out to lunch?" demanded Persley.

"Nobody, except Miss Hilda," George replied. "She went out just after you did and came back just before you did. Nobody else was here."

"That will do; you may go," said Persley.

The clerk stole a furtive glance at Hilda as he went out and closed the door. Evidently it was unusual for anything that Hilda did to be called into question.

"Now, Miss Hilda, we must have an understanding," said Persley. "I have trusted you and you are in possession of secrets which I must guard at any expense."

"Have I ever betrayed your confidence?" asked Hilda, her lips quivering.

"I never suspected you before," replied the banker. "But how do you account for this invasion of my private office?"

"On my honor, Mr. Persley, I know absolutely nothing about this," she said. "When I returned from lunch I found the photograph on my typewriter. That is all I know about it."

Persley paced back and forth, his hands behind his back and his head down. Hilda wept silently. From time to time the banker turned upon her a puzzled gaze which at length turned to an expression of grim, sinister determination. Finally he approached the window and stood looking out within two feet of the detective's eyes. "I can't afford to take a chance," he muttered, "I must get rid of her."

Turner thought of the dead man with the knife wound in his back; of the mysterious, silent shot in the dark at the French camp; of the gas-filled corridor beside him. What fiendish means would he devise for ridding himself of this beautiful girl who had innocently lost his confidence?

He had not long to wait. "Hilda," said Persley, "we will discuss this again later. Go out to the vault and get me the papers in the Mercantile case."

Instantly Hilda rose to obey. She closed the door as she went out, but Persley immediately opened it and followed her.

Through the door Turner could see the door of the vault, a massive steel affair with a time lock.

Persley looked furtively about. The clerks were busy and no one appeared to notice him. Turner felt a strong impulse to follow, but he argued that to reveal himself now might close forever the possibility of accomplishing his ultimate purpose. In a moment, however, his professional reputation and his pride in solving the mystery on which he had worked so long were scattered to the winds by an appeal which overshadowed all other considerations. Hilda entered the vault. Richard Persley followed her and placed his hand upon the door with the obvious intention of closing and locking it upon her.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE END OF THE WEB

THE detective ducked under the blind, placed his hands on the window-sill and vaulted into the office.

A half-dozen strides carried him to the door of the vault. It closed just as he reached it. Before the banker could turn the lock dial Turner struck down his hand and swung back the door.

So quickly and silently did he do this that the clerks, busy in the front of the office, did not see it. What followed at the door of the vault did not attract their attention for the reason that they were distracted by Greeley, who came out of the president's office with a roar like a bull.

His entrance was so explosive that Turner himself took his eyes from the banker for an instant. That instant was his undoing. Persley braced himself, threw a solid shoulder into the detective's solar plexus and sent him sprawling on the floor of the vault. Before he could rise the door slammed and he heard the whir of the combination disk.

There were electric lights in the vault, but this did not add greatly to the detective's peace of mind. He had narrowly escaped suffocation once that day, and his distaste for confinement was just so much stronger on that account.

Hilda backed against the files which lined the wall, her eyes wide open with terror. "He said you were not here!" she gasped.

"The answer is, he lied," said Turner.

"How came you in the vault?" she inquired tremulously.

"Persley pushed me in. I saw him about to close the door on you and I tried to save you."

"Why are you always following me?" she asked. "You make me feel as though I were a criminal."

"Don't say that," he remonstrated. "It is Persley I am following; he really is a criminal."

"I have tried so hard to think otherwise," she replied in a choking voice, "but he is such an unaccountable man. He was good to me when I came to America, alone and friendless. He helped me with my education, he gave me a position, he has been good to me in many ways, but how can a man deal with his own country and with its enemies at the same time and not be a criminal?"

"He can't," said the officer.

For a few moments they were silent. He looked into her brown eyes until her soft lashes covered them and her head drooped. He thought that perhaps she did not realize their desperate situation; the air was already becoming very close. "I hope," said he, "that my friend Greeley, the sailor, will be able to induce Persley to release us, but if he shouldn't——"

She looked up at him with a question in her eyes, but no sign of fear.

"You are such a mysterous girl," he exclaimed; "any other woman in the world would be hysterical, facing death as you are at this moment.

"Hysterics wouldn't help any, would they?" she asked, her eyes wide with terror. "He said you were not here!"

"No, but have you no fear of death?" he asked.

"Have you?" she replied.

"There is one thing," replied Turner earnestly, "which is greater than life or death—one thing which has come from out eternity and which will go on throughout eternity. Even in the presence of death I find I cannot look at you and think of anything but—love!"

"We must go," she exclaimed; "the air is suffocating!"

"Go! Where?" asked Turner.

She reached in between two rows of files and a small opening appeared in the floor. "Follow me," she said.

A short ladder brought them into an underground passage which looked as though it might be a continuation of the one in which Mace and Greeley had been confined.

"Where does this lead?" asked the detective.

"To the president's office," she replied.

They entered the office through a tiny door behind a curtain. Mace climbed out of the window and stationed himself once more behind the blind. Outside the door of the president's office the bank seemed to be subsiding after a turmoil. Turner guessed that the banker had succeeded in placing the blame for the disturbance entirely upon Greeley, and had probably concealed the fact that he had shut two persons into the vault with the intention of letting them die there.

At the first tapping of the typewriter Persley, who was standing just outside the door with his back toward it, started and broke out into perspiration. As it continued, he mopped his face with his handkerchief and turned as one who expects to see a ghost. Evidently he thought he was suffering from a mental hallucination.

Hilda kept right on with her work, while he tottered into the room and sank weakly into his chair. "Bring your book," he said huskily.

Mace kept his gun in his hand, not daring to trust her to the tender mercies of her employer for an instant. But she, evidently enjoying the impression she was creating, waited patiently for the dictation to begin.

Persley uttered a few unintelligible words. She put her pencil to the paper. Snap! The point broke. She took another and again started to write. This pencil also broke.

"How ridiculous—will you let me take your knife?" she asked. "That was my last good pencil."

Nervously Persley drew from his pocket an ivory-handled jack-knife. As he tremblingly opened the blade Turner saw that the point was broken. In a flash he was inside the room and had the banker covered with his revolver. "Miss Hornsten, take that knife, please," he said.

Hilda did as he requested. "Now take the bit of steel in this box and see if it fits at the point of the blade."

She opened the tiny box which he handed her, carefully removed the bit of steel and put it and the knife-blade together. "If the point were not rusted it would fit exactly," said Hilda.

"What is all this about?" demanded Persley.

"It ought not to be necessary to explain to you, Mr. Persley," replied Turner. "It ought not to be difficult for you to remember when and under what circumstances you lost the point of your knife-blade."

They were interrupted by the voice of Greeley, who entered the bank at the moment loudly demanding that those who were with him make haste and get the banker, dead or alive. As he and his party, which was composed of detectives from the central office, entered the room he rubbed his eyes and stared. "Did the old geezer let you out?" he exclaimed.

"I thought it was only a sailor's yarn," said one of the detectives, who Turner knew well. "He has been telling us that Mr. Persley here locked you and this young lady into the vault, but here you are chatting peacefully together."

Turner had pocketed his gun for the moment, but he took it out again. "In order to insure peace," he said, "I suggest that you put the bracelets on our friend the banker."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

THE detective hesitated. "Without a warrant?" asked one.

"Let me do it if you're afraid," exclaimed Mace. "I'm entitled to the pleasure, anyhow."

"Really, Mr. Turner, you are on dangerous ground," cautioned the officer.

"Haven't felt as safe in weeks," replied the detective. "See that knife? It's Persley's. See the broken point? The coroner and I found that in a wound in the back of a man picked up dead at Dolphin Island. I thought he was Miss Hornsten's brother, but he was——" he stopped and looked at Persley inquiringly.

"The wrong man," groaned the banker, involuntarily, then, regretting that he had spoken, he snapped his teeth together.

All eyes turned toward Hilda. Her clenched hands were pressed against her throat. Her eyes were flaming. "You wanted me to be utterly alone!" she cried. "You wanted me to be utterly dependent upon you!"

"As I am upon you," he replied, with an appealing glance.

For a moment her gaze softened, then she turned from him in loathing. "Go through these filing cases," she said to the detectives. "Take out the false bottoms. Read the treasonable despatches—I'll give you the key to the code. How could I have been so blind as not to see it all!"

After the search of the office, the transfer of the banker to a cell, and the release of Hilda on her own recognizance, Turner went to his apartment. In spite of the successful termination of his hunt, he was unhappy.

Restlessly he paced back and forth. Suddenly he stopped and listened. Save for that indistinct hum which the city sends forth in the evening hours there was no sound, but he put on his hat with as much haste as though he had received an urgent summons. As he left the room he fumbled in his pocket, drew out a notebook and turned to an address. "Mighty glad she was compelled to tell where she lived," he muttered.

The moon was shining through the trees in the suburb to which a taxi carried him. He left the machine at a corner and walked slowly down the street, peering up at the numbers on the houses.

A light was burning dimly in an upper window of the one before which he stopped. As he stood, hesitating, the door suddenly opened. He stepped quickly behind a tree.

Down the steps came Hilda in her red-trimmed bathing-suit and red cap. It was too much for Turner. Stepping out into the light, he said: "Surely you are not going into the water at this late hour."

"Why not?" she inquired without expressing any surprise at his presence. "I love to swim in the moonlight, with the phosphorescent water rippling all about me. And I am so happy to-night—I have a cable saying that my brother is safe with his company."

"I'm glad. And were you thinking about me an hour ago, and sending me a mental message inviting me to row beside you as you swam?"

She looked at him roguishly, but did not reply.

In the water the red cap suddenly disappeared. As the seconds passed and she did not come to the surface again, Turner became almost frenzied with anxiety. A slight movement of the boat, as though some one were underneath, pulling, caused him to run his hand around outside the gunwale. It encountered a plump arm, which struggled hard but unsuccessfully to free itself.

"This salt water will ruin your clothes," cried Hilda as he pulled her in.

"I'm never going to let you out of my sight again," declared Turner. "Never mind the clothes."

The boat drifted on in the moonlight. Presently it touched on a rocky shore. Turner looked about in surprise, but soon recognized Dolphin Island, with Greeley's cabin on the point.

The fisherman himself was sitting before the door. Turner picked up the coil of rope in the bow of the boat and swung it in preparation for a throw. "Here, tie us up, will you?" he called to Greeley.

Sadly, but without bitterness his friend replied: "I kin tie almost any kind of a knot that can be tied, but I can't tie the one you need—you'll have to git a parson to do that."

A BREAK FOR LIBERTY

A TRUE STORY OF THE GREAT LIBBY TUNNEL

By MAJOR ALFRED R. CALHOUN, *Author of "Marching Through Georgia" and "The Old Canteen"*

DURING the awfully cold winter of '63–'64 there were in Libby Prison fourteen hundred officers, ranging from beardless second lieutenants to grizzled commanders of brigades and divisions. Never before nor since have I seen a finer body of men. They represented every learned calling and productive pursuit, and they came from every State and Territory in the Union, and from every European country.

Libby Prison stood alone on Carey street in Richmond, and about it, at all hours of the day and night, there was kept a strong line of guards. There was no glass in the three tiers of windows, facing north and south, its place having been taken by heavy iron bars which the prisoners could not touch under penalty of death.

When I reached Libby, late in '63, I found many old friends who had preceded me from the Western army, and every man of them had a plan of escape, in which he wanted me to co-operate. All these plans were desperate, and most of them impossible.

Colonel Rose, of the Seventy-seventh Pennsylvania, who had been captured at Chickamauga, had planned to get into the prison cellar through a chimney, then cut through the foundation wall to the north and reach the Carey street sewer, which emptied into the James, some distance to the east. This work was successfully carried out, but the sewer was so foul, and so cold, that the undertaking was abandoned.

Although so crowded—there were fourteen hundred men in the prison—that when the men lay down on the floors at night they had to sleep "spoon-fashion" to economize space and blankets, yet the tunneling was carried on by about twenty-five men, without letting even their intimate friends into the secret.

Undaunted by his failure in the sewer, Colonel Rose planned a second tunnel, and, as I slept with one of the workers, I was taken into the secret.

The second proposition was to use the old method of reaching the cellar of the prison hospital, then cut through the heavy stone foundation to the east and burrow under a street sixty feet wide, on the opposite side of which was a high board fence that would conceal the exit from the guards.

A broken hinge, a chisel that had been "confiscated" from some mechanics when putting in the bars, a stove-poker, and some case-knives, with wooden spittoons to carry the dirt, and a rope made of torn blankets to haul the stuff out, were the sole appliances for cutting this tunnel to freedom.

To add to the difficulties, the prisoners were not allowed to sleep in the daytime. They had to turn out for roll-call with the first dawn, and at nine o'clock each night the few tallow candles were extinguished in response to the invariable call of the guards, which began in this way, and continued till every sentinel about the prison had given his number and echoed the order:

"Nine o'clock, Post Number One, and all's well! Lights out, up there! Lights out!"

It was only after the lights were out and the great mass of the prisoners asleep that the tunnelers could creep down to the cook room and make their way through the chimney to the hospital cellar. Needless to say no light was lit, and all the work was done in a darkness as profound as that in the lowest depths of the Mammoth Cave.

The hardest work was cutting through the foundation, in which there were many heavy stones. The débris, as it was taken out, was scattered over the floor, which was littered with loose fodder that had formerly been stored there.

After some headway had been made, the air inside the tunnel was soon exhausted. Men could only work for about twenty minutes at a time, and then only while two men stood at the opening, shaking a blanket so as to fan air to the digger inside.

Whenever a digger went in he dragged after him the wooden spittoon or box, and when he had filled it, he signaled by a jerk to a man who held one end of the double rope at the entrance. The contents were dumped into another vessel, the signal returned and the box went back. While the man inside filled up again, his second disposed of the last stuff taken out.

The tunnel was through clay, about seven feet below the sloping street level. It was just wide enough to let a man crawl through like a mole, and after the two weeks spent on the foundation, twenty inches a night was considered good progress.

There were many delays, mishaps, and increasing fears. We had to work under the feet of a guard, seldom more than ten feet away; and frequently the passing of heavy wagons caused a cave in, for it was impossible to protect the tunnel by an arch.

At length, after forty-six nights of continuous work, the great underground way to liberty and to "God's Land," as the prisoners called the North, was completed.

In anticipation of escape, the men in the tunnel secret had been saving their scant rations of corn-bread and black beans for days. When all was ready, the pledge of secrecy was removed, and, very naturally, every man was eager to tell his particular friends of what had been done. As a consequence, every prisoner knew of the tunnel before the guards called out "nine o'clock" on that cold February night.

Never were the tallow dips extinguished so quickly. At once the cook room, from which the descent to the cellar was made, was packed with a crowd of ragged, excited men, each determined to reach the avenue to freedom opened up by hard workers, who in the darkness were crowded back, so that but few of Rose's party got out till after midnight.

Men, usually so unselfish and sympathetic, now showed the worse side of their nature. In their mad desire to get out, the stronger jostled the weaker aside, or recklessly trampled them under foot. Men, making their way down the opening in the chimney, were seized and hauled back by stronger men who took their places.

All this time the dormant savage in every man's nature seemed to assert itself with a blind fury. Profanity was not unusual in Libby, but never before nor since have I heard men swear as they did that night.

The wild uproar was heard by the guards outside, but they had heard shouting and stamping so often after the lights were out that they paid no heed to it. Four times Captain Martin of the East Tennessee Artillery and myself were about to enter the chimney when we were caught and flung back, and separated among the swearing, excited mass.

It began to look as if the guards would investigate the continued noise and defeat our purpose by discovering our plan. Soon after midnight a few of us got together near the wall, and shouted: "The guards! The guards!" The ruse worked. A wild rush for quarters was made by the mob, and some were injured in the darkness.

Realizing that as soon as the false alarm was discovered, the mob would again sweep down through the darkness, those in the secret at once rushing for the fire-place. Here, to our horror, we discovered a man held fast.

"My God," he cried, "I cannot get down!"

"Then come back!" was the response.

A dozen hands seized him and pulled him out of the opening. The man had tried to get through with a blanket and overcoat about him, but he was too bulky.

Strong though the poor fellow was, he fell to the floor in a heap, and sobbed as if his heart were breaking. But here, as on the battle-field, there was no time for sympathy.

We heard the thunder of feet on the stairs and on the floor above, and knowing that that blind, cruel, merciless mob would soon be on us in the darkness, the few of us about the fire-place hurried through and, panting with excitement, dropped into the cellar.

After my experience in the Stygian blackness of that cellar, I can well understand the facility with which blind men make their way about. Five seconds after I had dropped from the chimney to the cellar floor I was inside the tunnel.

About the middle of the passage, a slight detour had to be made on account of a boulder, and this point some one humorously named "Fat Man's Misery," though never a fat man passed through it. On reaching this place I found a man stuck. His trousers were caught by the stone and he could neither go back nor ahead. He proved to be Lieutenant Von Clodt, an Austrian Count, who had been sent over by his Government to study our war, and who, when captured at Gettysburg, held an honorary position on the staff of General Sickles.

"Mein Gott! Mein Gott!" shouted Von Clodt.

In the excitement he had forgotten his English, but I, fortunately, knew some German, and learning of the trouble, I unhitched the trousers, pulled them back, and carried them out with me. In the meantime the pushing and the uproar behind me were something never to be forgotten. To add to the horror of the place, a wagon passed overhead and shook the earth.

After coming up inside the board fence before referred to, we had to turn south and pass through a picket gate, that had a smaller gate in the center, and which filled up the arch of another warehouse. We knew of this obstruction in advance, but it was decided, unwisely as it turned out, to keep these gates closed, so as not to excite suspicion. Colonel William L. Watson, of Brooklyn's famous Thirteenth, and then a young lieutenant of the Twenty-first Wisconsin, ignored this order. He opened the gate and made it fast, so facilitating the egress to the street of all who came after him.

While Von Clodt—the first man recaptured, by the way—was pulling on his trousers, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and I recognized Captain Martin's voice saying:

"My God, old fellow, I have been freezing and waiting here for you for hours. If it had been any other man, I'd have left him, but I knew you'd come."

We went through the arch to the canal, fifty feet away. As I turned to look back at the prison, I saw the guard standing with his piece at a right shoulder, under the corner lamp. He was so close that I could have drawn his features. He saw us, but supposed we were Confederates making a raid on the Yankee supplies that had been received under flag of truce, and were stored in the warehouse with the arch under its western wing. Never can I forget the cry of the guards, nor of

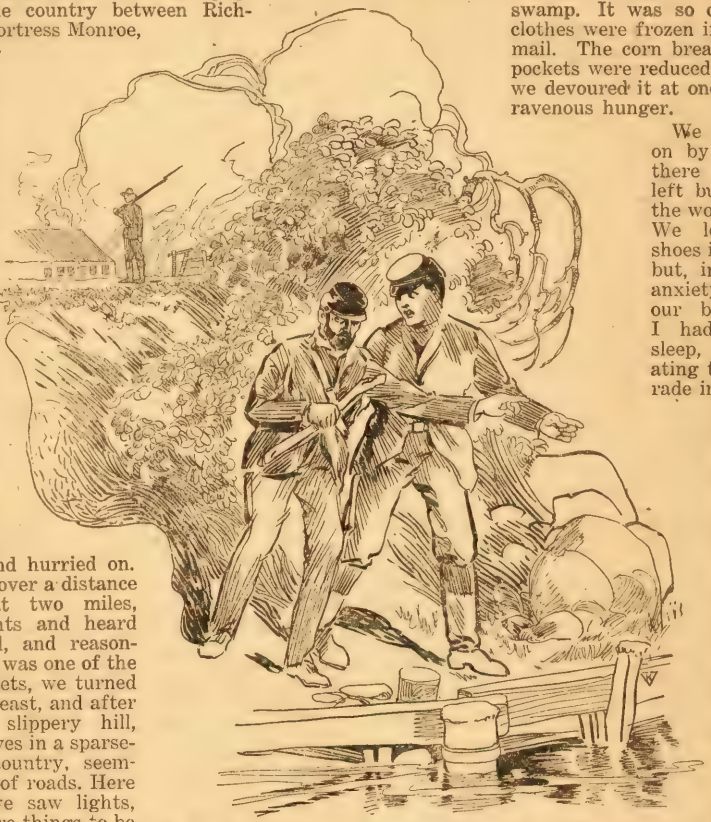
that one in particular. As Martin and I turned to the east, he shouted:

"Half-past one, Post Number Ten, and all's well!"

Cold, hungry, and weak though I was, I could not help whispering to my friend: "It's a blanked sight weller than that Johnny thinks!"

Although attempts had been made by our friends from the Army of the Potomac to give the Western men an idea of the topography of the country between Richmond and Fortress Monroe, the objective point of nearly all, we knew but little, save the general direction and the position of the stars, for our traveling must be done by night.

At a quick pace we went to the east. Reaching a depression running north, and in which there was a railroad track, we entered it and hurried on. After going over a distance estimated at two miles, we saw lights and heard voices ahead, and reasoning that this was one of the enemy's pickets, we turned again to the east, and after climbing a slippery hill, found ourselves in a sparsely wooded country, seemingly devoid of roads. Here and there we saw lights, but these were things to be avoided.



As Martin and I turned to the east, the guard called out: "Half-past one, Post No. 10, and all's well!"

The weather was bitterly cold, with a cutting wind from the northwest. My only defense was a ragged cavalry tunic and a pair of trousers that needed "reinforcements to the rear." Martin had an old capless artillery overcoat, in the pockets of which was stored the corn bread, saved up by previous starving, for this trip.

With the North Star to our left, we pushed on desperately till the gray, cold dawn began to face us; then we found ourselves in a morass, which we rightly believed to be the famous Chickahominy Swamp. Through the frozen expanse shrubs and stunted trees arose before us like miniature black islands. A swift skater might have gone over the thin ice safely, but we had no skates. A dozen times we sank to our armpits through the ice, and could only rise to the surface again by breaking a passage to a friendly tree. It was about ten o'clock when we got to the eastern margin of the great swamp. It was so cold that our clothes were frozen into clattering mail. The corn bread in Martin's pockets were reduced to mush, but we devoured it at one meal in our ravenous hunger.

We dared not go on by daylight, so there was nothing left but to stay in the woods till night. We lost our old shoes in the swamp, but, in our awful anxiety, we forgot our bleeding feet. I had lost much sleep, and appreciating this, my comrade insisted on my lying down with his overcoat about me, while he kept his blood warm by beating a path around the cedar branches on which I lay.

I slept till well on in the afternoon, and might have kept on had not Martin, in his weakness, stumbled and fallen over me. I leaped to my feet, as soldiers do when they hear the "long roll," and insisted that the captain should take the coat and my place on the cedar branches.

The sun had been down about an hour when we started off again, each speaking a doubtful cheer to the other. About midnight we struck a rutted, clay road leading to the east, and this we followed till near daylight, when the golden bars of light, coming through the chinks of a log cabin

near the road, attracted our attention. It must have been about five o'clock in the morning of February 13th; and looking through the slits, we saw an old negro and his wife seated before a roaring wood fire.

The black faces bespoke friends. We knocked, and after much questioning were admitted. These old people fed us. They gave us a place to sleep in the smoky loft, and while we slept—what a sleep it was!—the old woman sewed our tattered rags, and the old man went off to borrow shoes from his friends, for, according to his wife, "Uncle Ike was a powerful good scrimmidger."

Near sunset we were aroused by the ringing of bridle chains and the clatter of scabbards, and looking out through the slits, we saw about a dozen troopers in gray about the cabin.

"Hello, uncle! Seen any Yankees 'round here?" asked the sergeant in command.

"No, sah, I don't see none," replied the old man.

"I'll light my pipe," said the sergeant.

"My God!" gasped Martin, as he clutched my arm. "We are gone!"

The sergeant, followed by two of his men, came in. Lying there on our faces, we could see them through the slits and smell the fumes of the tobacco. I wanted to cough, but dared not. One of the men rested against the little ladder by which we had reached the loft, and every moment we expected to see him mount, but he did not.

After much questioning, which the old people answered with great cunning, the troopers rode away, swearing at everything in general and the escaping Yankees in particular.

About nine o'clock that night, and after a hearty meal of pone, bacon and "sorghum" coffee, a young colored man showed up, and Uncle Ike told us that he was to be our guide.

Homer—that was the black boy's name—led us eastward till near day, when he shook hands, saying: "Bress yo', mastahs, but de nex' time yo' comes dis way, pray God yo' may hab guns in yo'r han's."

Uncle Ike not only fed us, but his wife filled Martin's pockets with food. This we ate the next day; but in our march the old shoes given us by the colored man had fallen to pieces, and our feet were cut and blistered.

Waiting in the woods till night, we started on again, having to make frequent detours to avoid the enemy's pickets and videttes. The next day we were without food and very weak; but a black man, whom we met in the woods, cheered our hearts with the assurance that he had seen Yankee cavalry that day.

Hopeful, but tottering, we pushed on, when darkness came and clouds obscured our guides—the stars. Martin was as brave a man as ever sat a horse, but the poor fellow was broken down, and I was nearly as weak. With our arms interlocked, we, staggered blindly eastward, unminding the bleeding tracks, resisting the overwhelming desire to sleep, and thinking only of a sight of the flag—and liberty.

We reeled on like drunken men till about three o'clock in the morning, when, descending a slope, we saw a blazing fire in front. About it was a group of men in long overcoats and stacks of arms.

"Friends!" I whispered to Martin.

These men had made a fire of the broken branches of a giant tree that had been uprooted by the wind. The roots formed a shield twelve feet high. I left Martin in the hollow from which the roots had been torn, determined to get near enough to the picket post to discover the true character of the men. As I crawled along a branch broke under me, sounding to me like the discharge of artillery. I leaped to my feet, to find a dozen rifles pointed in my direction.

"Don't fire!" I shouted. "I am a friend!"

"You're an escaping Yank. Come in!" was the response.

I did "come in," as did Martin the next minute. After all the effort, we had run into a picket post of the Twenty-first Virginia, sent out to recapture us.

These Confederates were veterans and gentlemen. They fed us, sympathized with us, and, I am sure, felt sorrow at our failure, but they had to do their duty.

We were too weak to march back to Libby, to which we were returned, to find that out of the one hundred and ten men who had escaped through the great tunnel, Martin and myself completed the fifty who were recaptured.

As we were carried off in a mule cart at daylight, we heard firing in the east, and looking back we could see the sun flashing on the blue guidons and the sabers of the Union cavalry.

ANCIENT INDIAN DITCHES

The remains of irrigation systems that date back to prehistoric times when the valleys of Arizona were inhabited by highly civilized Indian tribes are still in existence. One of the most famous of these is on the State highway running from Prescott to the Grand Canyon. Water is taken from what is known as "Montezuma's Well," a curious natural well 440 feet in diameter and 93 feet deep, except in one spot, where no bottom has been reached at 500 feet. Lime in solution is carried by the water, and the sides of the ditch have been preserved by the petrifaction of the original earth.

One ranch owner is using several thousand feet of these ditches after simply cleaning them out. A line of levels was run along the bottom of one of these old Indian ditches and showed the grade to be almost perfectly uniform.

IN DEEP DISGUISE

By MONSIEUR LECOCQ

"PIERRE, I want you."

"On hand, monsieur."

My respected uncle sat at his desk holding in his hand an open letter.

"Here is a little case for you, to be attended to immediately, mon garcon. If not stupendous, it is at least singular."

He proceeded to explain.

M. Alexandre Du Bois, a wealthy merchant doing business in the Rue Lorraine, had been robbed the day previous of the snug little sum of twenty-five thousand francs.

The money, which was in bank-notes, had been mysteriously abstracted from his counting-room some time during the evening, the thief leaving not the slightest clue which might lead to his identification. The locks to the doors were found, in the morning, to be intact, and being of a peculiar pattern could not possibly have been opened unless the proper keys had been used. Further particulars, M. Du Bois stated in his letter, would be given to the detective detailed to work up the case.

"Work it up, mon Pierre," said my uncle, with a sordid grin. "M. Du Bois is rich, and generous." An hour later I stood in the presence of the merchant, a gentlemanly-looking man of middle age, whose face was as impassive as a wax mask.

"Be seated, M. Chassac," he said, courteously, after glancing at the card I extended to him, and waving me to a chair. "You have been made acquainted, I presume, with the contents of the letter I sent your superior?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"A rich haul for the thief, eh," he said, with a grim smile.

"Twenty-five thousand francs," I answered quietly, "was a large sum to leave exposed."

"Exposed!" said M. Du Bois. "It was in my private desk, to which no one has access but myself and my nephew, Henri Lenthier."

"Your nephew!" I said reflectively. "Would it be possible the young gentleman—"

"Monsieur," interrupted M. Du Bois, "my nephew is not a thief. If he needed ten times that sum he knows I would freely give it to him. He will be my heir, and he is dear to me as a son. It is simply absurd to connect him with this robbery."

"Please state the matter as briefly as you can, M. Du Bois, and allow me to take notes."

"Certainly. I drew twenty-five thousand francs out of the bank yesterday, to meet a note given by me to one M. Beaudry. The note, however, was not presented for payment. Retaining the money until after the bank was closed, I concluded to lock it in my desk until this morning, and did so. At nine o'clock this morning the expected note was presented, and I unlocked the desk. The money was gone, and with it a small memorandum-book that was in the same roll."

"The lock was not forced?"

"No, sir; the desk was apparently exactly as I left it."

"And M. Lenthier has the only duplicate?"

The old gentleman frowned. He was evidently displeased at the turn my suspicions were taking.

"Yes; my nephew certainly has the only duplicate key."

"Ah, yes. Have you the number of all the notes?"

"Yes. The roll consisted of twenty-five one-thousand-franc notes."

The list of numbers being taken, I made a searching examination of the apartment, and then prepared to take my departure. As I paused a moment by the door, M. Du Bois said, nervously:

"I think, M. Chassac, if you make any discoveries, you had better report to me privately before making any arrests."

"Certainly, sir, if you desire it," I answered. "Will you also grant me one favor? Do not mention the robbery to M. Lenthier, if you have not done so already."

"No one has heard of it but yourself," he answered. "But, M. Chassac," half petulantly, "I have already told you that it is impossible that my nephew would rob me. I can't believe it; and yet—"

He paused abruptly, a look of pain flitted across his features, and his head drooped slowly forward. Evidently the suspicions I entertained, and had half expressed, had impressed him more than he would have been willing to confess.

"And yet Henri knew the money was there," he resumed, in a tone scarcely audible. "He knew that Beaudry's note was not presented, and Henri alone has a duplicate key. Oh, if it should be Lisette's boy, that I have promised to love as a son! Have I kept my promise? Where have I failed? And why should he steal from me when all I have is his? I cannot, will not believe it."

"I will leave you now, M. Du Bois," I said, quietly, at this juncture, "but will call again when I have any report to make. In the meantime——"

At this moment the sound of rapid footsteps approaching the apartment fell upon our ears. I glanced inquiringly towards M. Du Bois.

"It is Henri," he said, in a constrained voice—"my nephew."

A sudden impulse seized me, and drawing a wig of flaxen hair from my pocket, I clapped it over my own raven locks. Then, hastily divesting myself of my coat, I took down a linen duster which was hanging on the wall, and put that on also, M. Du Bois, in the meantime, watching my proceedings with well-bred surprise.

"Listen, M. Du Bois," I said hurriedly, as I completed my disguise. "As you are aware, I suspect that your nephew has betrayed the trust you repose in him, and deliberately robbed you; but this is only suspicion, and unless confirmed amounts to naught. For a brief space I am going to assume the rôle of clerk. Introduce me as 'Pierre Renoult,' the son of an old friend. The rest I will manage myself," and seizing a pen, I had barely time to seat myself at a desk when the door opened, and Henri Lenthier entered the apartment.

Looking into his handsome young face, bright and frank, with wide-opened, brown eyes, and curls of nut-brown hair, it was hard to connect it with any idea of roguery, ingratitude and theft. But experience had taught me that a fair outside may often hide a wicked and corrupted heart.

After kindly greeting the young man, M. Du Bois arose, and with a somewhat embarrassed air, and evidently disliking the position I had placed him in, proceeded to introduce me according to my instructions.

M. Lenthier acknowledged the introduction gracefully, warmly expressing, at the same time, hopes of a better acquaintance. He in manner was frank, open, and irresistibly winning, and I felt attracted towards him in spite of myself.

A friendly chat followed between the two men, and I noticed that M. Lenthier's manner towards his uncle was the perfection of respectful attention. Before he had been an hour in the counting-room, it was easy to see that M. Du Bois' fears were easily dissipated.

They were talking to a certain dark-eyed little maiden, who was soon to be Madame Lenthier, and when the young man left his uncle, it was with a promise that he would call in the evening upon Mademoiselle Lamoy to arrange for the wedding-day.

The young man spent the entire afternoon with his betrothed, received his uncle in the evening beside her, and accompanied the old gentleman to his boarding-house, receiving an affectionate farewell when he took his way to his rooms in another house.

A week passed by, and I still occupied my seat in M. Du Bois' office. Despite my utmost endeavor I had made no headway—had gained not the slightest clue to the mysterious thief. I was about to throw up the case in disgust, when, by the merest chance, I made a most startling discovery. M. Lenthier had, the day before, tendered in payment for a pearl locket, purchased of one Theroux, a noted jeweler and lapidary, one of the stolen notes. This discovery was all the more startling, from the fact that I had fully convinced myself by this time that Henri Lenthier had nothing, directly, to do with the robbery. But indirectly—unconsciously—had he? I puzzled my brain in vain for a solution of the affair, and then, after a long consultation with M. Du Bois, resolved upon a decisive course of action.

It was just when summer twilight was fading that, returning home from a drive with Mlle. Lamoy, M. Henri met his uncle's clerk (?) waiting for him at the Lamoy mansion.

"I have a note for you, M. Lenthier," I began, in a tone of studied coldness, "and as you were not at home I thought I would await for you here."

Irene glanced towards me apprehensively.

"You have bad news?" she cried.

"Perhaps M. Lenthier had better read the note," I replied, evasively.

But the young girl's terror was only increased when Henri, after reading the note, broke into a furious exclamation of rage.

"Who dares say that I am a midnight burglar?" he shouted.

"Oh, Henri! what is it?" asked Irene, turning very white.

"My uncle has been robbed of twenty-five thousand francs, and he pays me the compliment of supposing me to be the thief, because I have a duplicate key to his private desk. I—great heaven!" he cried, with a sudden change in his voice, "he cannot mean it. I rob my uncle, I——"

"M. Henri," said I, respectfully, advancing as I spoke, "I only waited to see how you took the note to speak a few words of advice. I've known you but a short while, M. Lenthier, yet I feel certain that you never took the money. Things look ugly for you, however."

"But," cried the young man, in a bewildered tone, as he grasped the hand I held out to him, "I cannot understand it. Listen!" and he read aloud the note from his uncle:

"M. HENRI LENTHIER—I could not believe without proof—undeniable, positive proof—that you could rob me of twenty-five thousand francs, taken, as you know, from my private desk on Wednesday last. You are my sister's son, and I will never be the one to imprison or punish you; but you are no longer a nephew of mine. Willingly, I will never look in your face again. Your ill-gotten gains I freely give you to start in some business, trusting that you will endeavor to live honestly in the future. Do not try to see me; I will not listen to any explanations I know to be false. Do not write, for I will not open your letters. ALEXANDER DU BOIS."

Irene Lamoy grew white as death as she heard the stern edict. She looked so pitifully grief-stricken that for a moment I felt tempted to undeceive her, and assure her of M. Du Bois' still unshaken confidence in his nephew's integrity.

"Oh, Henri!" she cried, "what can you do?"

"Starve, I suppose," was the bitter answer, "as I do not happen to possess the ill-gotten gains he so generously presents me. But I will not ask you to starve with me, Irene. You were betrothed to the millionaire's nephew and heir; the disinherited beggar frees you from your promise."

"Henri," she cried, bursting into tears, "how can you be so cruel?" Then, unheeding my humble self—but I was discreetly looking from the window—she came close to Henri's side. "Darling," she said, fixing her large, black eyes upon his face, "if all the world cast you off, I will keep my promise."

The young lover had been bewildered, indignant, desperate, but he folded the gentle comforter in his arms, and great tears fell on her upturned face.

"God bless you, ma chere!" he murmured, "I can defy the world if you are true to me. Now, M. Renault," turning to me, "sit down, and tell me what you know of this wretched business."

"Well, M. Henri," I began, unblushingly, "I never heard of the robbery until this morning, when Chassac, the detective your uncle employed to work it up, came to make his report. They did not notice me at first, and when your uncle remembered I was in the room, I had heard about all that Chassac knew. You remember there was a note coming due last Wednesday."

"To M. Beaudry?"

"Yes; well, it was to meet this note that twenty-five thousand francs were drawn out of the bank the day before by your uncle. This money, M. Lenthier, was stolen from M. Du Bois' desk some time during Wednesday evening by means of duplicate keys. Now, M. Lenthier," I said, earnestly, my eyes fixed searchingly upon his face, "the stolen money was all in one-thousand-franc notes, and your uncle had the numbers."

"Well," he said, staring at me in a dazed way.

"This morning," I continued, deliberately, "Chassac, the detective, brought back one of the notes which you gave to Theroux, the lapidary, yesterday, in payment for a pearl locket."

"Stop! M. Renault, let me think," murmured the young man, knitting his brows, thoughtfully. "Where did I get that note?"

He was silent a space, and then a look of relief brightened his features.

"I have it," he cried, eagerly. "Laforce gave it to me to take out two hundred and fifty francs I lent him some time ago. And Laforce, M. Renault—Laforce borrowed my keys last Wednesday night to open his trunk. Renault, huzza! We know the thief."

This was certainly a new phase of the matter, but there were difficulties yet to surmount.

"Not so fast, M. Henri," I said, quietly—"not so fast. It will not be an easy matter to prove this. Who is this man Laforce?"

"A young doctor, lately admitted to practice, who rooms at the boarding-house I stop at."

"Were there any witnesses present when Laforce borrowed the keys?"

"No; I was all alone in my room, half undressed, when he knocked at my door and said he had lost the key of his trunk. I lent him my bunch of keys, which he returned before I was out of bed the next day?"

"And you were alone when he paid you the money?"

"Yes; and I thought at the time he was very flush, for I know well that a note for a thousand francs is not a daily visitor in Lama Laforce's pocket."

"I comprehend the whole matter," I said, after a moment's thought. "M. Laforce is a cunning scoundrel. He wants to ascertain if the notes can be identified before he tries to get rid of them himself. M. Lenthier, will you leave the entire thing to me for a few days? And if I do not nab the thief, I——"

"But my uncle?" interrupted Henri.

"Wait till you can prove your innocence before you see him. Only a week—give me only a week to watch Laforce. And, by the way, you will give me an additional chance if you will leave the city. Throw him off his guard by letting him suppose you are banished for his crime?"

"What! Run away like a coward?" flashed the young man.

"Only for a week," I responded. "You see, M. Lenthier, the probability is that Laforce has the money in his possession yet. He will wait to see the fate of what he has given you before putting any more into circulation; but he has probably hidden it very securely. He will watch, but if you are willing, I will take your room while you are gone, and do the best in my power, I assure you, to establish your innocence, and bring the guilty party to justice."

It was not an easy matter to persuade the young man to consent to my plan, but Irene's persuasions being added, he finally consented to leave the city for a week, and return in time to vindicate his own innocence in case of my failure.

Before night Henri was on his way to Rouen, and his landlady had agreed to allow Monsieur Renault (?) to occupy his place during his absence.

M. Lenthier had been gone ten days, when, according to agreement, I called upon Mademoiselle Lamoy to report progress.

"I am completely baffled," I confessed in answer to her inquiries. "Laforce has ascertained that I am doing business with M. Du Bois, and evidently suspects me. In fact, the rascal cleverly shadowed me yesterday, and saw me enter the counting-room. He is so affectionately desirous of keeping me in sight, that I cannot get a peep in his room, and whenever he is out—which is only when he is assured that I am away—he locks the door and gives the key to the landlady. I am not prepared to proceed to extreme measures as yet, but by the time M. Lenthier returns I fear the money will be

smuggled away. I am sure the money is still in his possession, from the fact that he is so careful about his apartments; and if I don't see my way clear before many hours have passed, I must watch my opportunity and force the door. I did think of bribing the chamber-maid to let me in when she was at work there, but unfortunately she left to-day."

A flash of light seemed to pass across Irene's fair face, but she only said, demurely:

"Your landlady is German, is she not?"

"Yes; her French is very imperfect. Have you ever seen her?"

"No, but I have heard Henri speak of her. My mother, M. Renault, was also German."

"But what has this to do with M. Lenthier's case, Mademoiselle Lamoy?" in queried, curiously.

"I will tell you, M. Renault," she responded. "I mean to try and catch the thief."

"You," I laughed. "Why, what can you do?"

"Come to-morrow and I will tell you," she answered, saucily, and disappeared.

I took my way to my boarding-house in a brown study. As I had informed Mlle. Lamoy, I was unwilling to resort to extreme measures just then, for, though I was morally certain that the money was in Laforce's possession, I had no positive proof of the fact, and one false move would have ruined the entire case.

Dr. Laforce was already at the table when I entered the dining-room. He greeted me with well-bred courtesy, and seemed to be in the best of humor, enlivening the meal with many a *bon mot* and laughable jest, but I noticed a mocking light in his bold eyes whenever they encountered mine. Had he discovered my identity, I wondered!

On the morrow, punctual to the appointed time, I made my appearance at the Lamoy mansion. With dancing eyes and flushed cheeks, Irene welcomed me.

"Well," I smiled, "have you caught the thief?"

"Yes, monsieur, I have," she responded, emphatically.

I was dumfounded by the reply.

"And I have telegraphed to dear Henri to return immediately," she went on, breathlessly. "He will be here this evening, M. Renault, and you must bring M. Du Bois and the proper police authorities to meet in his room. Then, M. Renault, go to M. Laforce's room and remove the pipe of the stove at the elbow. In the joint you will find M. Du Bois' memorandum-book and the missing notes."

"You must be a witch," I said, recovering somewhat from my amazement. "But you are certain of what you state, Mlle. Lamoy?"

"Listen," she smiled. "This morning, in a calico dress, sun-bonnet, and coarse shoes for disguise, I applied for the place of chamber-maid, made vacant at your boarding-house yesterday. I braided my hair in two long plaits, and convinced your landlady that I was a recent importation from Germany, and unable to speak a word of French. She agreed to take me one week on trial, and before I had been two hours in the house, I was sent to tidy up M. Laforce's room. Never was a room tidied so quickly; and, seeing my mistress on her way to market, I shot the bolt and took a survey of the premises. The trunk was locked, the bureau drawer wide open, the closet door ajar. I felt a reluctance to overhaul any private depositories, though I should have done it," she added, resolutely, "if I had been driven to it. I rummaged a little, when on the closet floor I espied a shirt, apparently scarcely soiled, except one sleeve, and that was black with soot. I wondered what he would be doing at the fire-place in summer, and went to examine. A few minutes sufficed to convince me that the stove had been moved out and the elbow of the pipe removed. I repeated the process, to find a roll of one-thousand-franc notes and a small note-book with the name of Alexandre Du Bois on the first page. I carefully replaced everything, threw up my situation and came home. Now, M. Renault, he must be taken by surprise, or he may say Henri put the notes there."

"You are a smart girl!" I cried, looking with admiration at the beautiful, animated face, "and M. Henri will owe you more than his life—his reputation."

"He can repay me by coming to tell me the good news when he is clear," she answered.

Eight was struck by the city clocks when Dr. Lama Laforce, dressed in the latest fashion, and with a fragrant Havana between his lips, strolled leisurely into his apartment.

The door had scarcely closed behind him, when a party of five, headed by myself, emerged from the parlor, and noiselessly ascending the stairs, grouped ourselves variously about the narrow corridor. A whispered conversation with M. Du Bois, who formed one of the party, and then I approached and tapped lightly upon the door.

"Come in!" said the cheery voice of M. Laforce.

But his face turned livid as his call was obeyed, and his unexpected visitors entered the room.

Two policemen stationed themselves at once on his right and left, while M. Du Bois, Henri Lenthier, and myself placed ourselves before the doorway.

Glancing about the apartment, I saw a small traveling satchel, half-filled with necessaries for a journey, lying beneath the bed, tossed there evidently but a few moments before. Assuredly we were just in time.

"Now, M. Chassac," said M. Du Bois, and Laforce started nervously as he heard the name, "will you tell us where to search for those missing notes?"

"What notes?" cried Laforce, savagely. "What does this outrage mean?"

"It means," I answered, throwing aside my hat and flaxen wig as I advanced, "that your plan to throw the robbery of M. Du Bois' private desk upon his nephew has failed. It means that the

twenty-five thousand francs stolen from that gentleman are now in your possession, except only one note given to M. Lenthier in payment of a debt."

"It's a lie!" cried the prisoner; but his white face, faltering voice, and shaking limbs were no proof of innocence. "Search my trunks; search everything I have."

"No, gentlemen," I said, quietly. "Draw out the stove, if you please, and look in the elbow of the pipe."

With a hoarse cry of rage and despair Lama Laforce fell senseless to the floor.

M. Du Bois turned to Henri, with outstretched hands.

"Forgive me, if, for an instant, I doubted you, mon ami," he murmured, lowly.

Dr. Lama Laforce spent some weeks in prison ere his trial and conviction, but before his sentence was pronounced, Monsieur and Madame Henri Lenthier were crossing the Channel on a wedding-tour to England.

THE MASKED EXECUTIONER

LORD S. was the favorite of George II, and one of the generals of the English army at the battle of Dettingen. The dispositions of Marshal de Noalles were so judicious that nothing but the impetuosity of a subordinate French officer saved the allied army from destruction and even gave them an unexpected victory. The consequence was that Lord S., who was the only person that seemed to be sensible of the unskilful movements of the allies, but whose sentiments were disregarded, lost the favor of his sovereign and retired from the army in disgust. On his arrival in London he proposed to reside on his estate in Scotland, but some days before his intended departure he received a letter in a very extraordinary style, calculated at once to stimulate curiosity in a mind not easily daunted. It desired an interview at a particular time and place upon business of the utmost importance, and requiring him to come unattended. His lordship, who did not pay immediate attention to this letter, received a second the next day, in terms still more energetic. This second summons appeared too singular to be disregarded. Lord S. therefore went to the place appointed without any attendants, but not unarmed; nor was he absolutely devoid of fear when he entered one of the by-places in the metropolis that most commonly indicate the residence of poverty and wretchedness. He went up a dirty staircase into a garret, where, by the glimmering light he perceived a man stretched upon a bed, with every appearance of extreme old age.

"My lord," said this unexpected object, "I was impatient to see you. I have heard of your fame. Be seated; you have nothing to apprehend from a man a hundred and twenty-five years old."

Lord S. sat down, while the centenary proceeded to enquire whether his lordship had not occasion for certain writings that related to his family and his fortune.

"Yes," replied his lordship with emotion, "I want certain papers, the loss of which has deprived me of a great part of my inheritance."

"There," returned the old man, giving him the key of a small casket, "there are those writings deposited."

"To whom," said his lordship—"to whom am I indebted for this inestimable favor?"

"Oh, my son," replied the old man; "come and embrace your great-grandfather."

"My great-grandfather!" interrupted his lordship with inexpressible astonishment. But how much more was he astonished when this ancestor informed him that he was the masked executioner of King Charles I.

"An insatiable thirst of vengeance," continued he, "impelled me to this abominable crime. I had been treated, as I imagined, with the highest indignity by my sovereign. I suspected him of having abducted my daughter. I sacrificed every sense of loyalty and virtue to revenge this imaginary injury. I entered into all the designs of Cromwell and his associates, I paved the way to his usurpation, I even refined on vengeance. I solicited Cromwell to let me be the executioner; to fill up the measure of my guilt, the unhappy king knew before the fatal blow the man that was to inflict it. From that day my soul has been a prey to distraction and remorse. I have been an exile, a voluntary outcast in Europe and Asia near fourscore years. Heaven, as if to punish me with severer rigor, has prolonged my existence beyond the ordinary term of nature. This casket is the only remains of my fortune. I came here to end my wretched days: I had heard of your disgrace at court, so much the reverse of what your virtues merited, and I was desirous before I breathed my last to contribute this to your welfare. All I ask is that you shed a tear to my memory."

Lord S. earnestly pressed his ancestor to retire with him to Scotland, and there to live for the remainder of his days under a feigned name. He long withstood all these entreaties, but wearied out at length by importunity, he consented, or rather seemed to consent. The next day, however, when his lordship returned he found that his repentant great-grandfather had quitted the spot; and, notwithstanding all the researches that were made his fate remains a mystery to this day.

THE TREACHERY OF RUDOLPH

By EMMA HOWARD WIGHT

CARL the Dane stood gazing rather sadly at the pretty head very well executed in marble.

"Poor Rudolph," he murmured; " I fear that it will be long before you may marry your sweetheart."

He sighed, crossed the room and took up his chisel. The hot sun poured in through the one window which the little room, high up under the roof, contained. Carl and Rudolph, his friend, shared the room as a common studio. They had been friends now for six years, drawn closer by the struggles, the disappointments, the poverty, which were the lot of both.

The door was thrown open and Rudolph entered.

"What luck?" asked Carl.

Rudolph tossed his cap upon the bare floor and sank wearily into a chair.

"Luck? None," he replied bitterly. "The dealer claims that he has not had even one offer for my dancing girl. The price is too high; he urges that one unknown like myself should not set so high a price upon his work. He calls twenty-five dollars too high a price, when once I would have laughed at the very idea of selling such a piece of work for less than two hundred. Oh, Carl, I am weary of the struggle. I had better go back to the old home and the work in the fields."

Carl crossed the room and laid his hand gently upon Rudolph's shoulder. The two young men were strikingly unlike in appearance. Carl had the shoulders of a Hercules, with a face as fair as a woman's, clear, blue eyes, soft and gentle in expression, and blond hair, curly and silken as a little child's. Rudolph was sinewy in build, dark and swarthy, with very black hair and restless, passionate eyes.

"Cheer up, Rudolph," said Carl, "luck will come after a while. Perhaps it is here even now; listen, Mr. Frankinstein, our good master, has been here during your absence. The Count von Warden invites all sculptors to submit at the end of three months the model of a statue of The Virgin. The sculptor submitting the model adjudged to be the best will receive the commission to make a life-sized statue for the church, for which he will be paid twenty thousand dollars. Frankinstein wishes you and me to enter the competition. What say you, Rudolph?"

Rudolph's pale, dark face flamed with a rare color.

"Yes, yes!" he cried, excitedly. "I shall put my whole soul into it and I may win. Twenty thousand dollars! 'Tis a fortune! I could then marry Lena; and it would mean fame also, and fame means riches. I shall commence at once."

He rose to his feet and moved impetuously across the room. Carl smiled a pleased, gentle smile, and returned to his work.

Three months later.

Rudolph was standing in the attic studio before a small plaster-of-paris model of The Virgin. His arms were folded across his breast, his dark brows met in a moody frown.

"It is perfect!" he muttered. "Perfect!"

The door opened and a thin little man, with long, rough hair and twinkling black eyes, came into the room. As he caught sight of the model he raised both hands with a rapturous exclamation.

"Heavens! It is good; it is sublime!" he cried. "Rudolph, thou hast surpassed thyself. Thou wilt surely get the commission."

Rudolph started and his lips quivered.

"You—you are pleased with it?" he stammered.

"Pleased? I am enchanted—enraptured!" replied the little Mr. Frankinstein, his small body all a-quiver with excitement. "It is perfect! The whole figure breathes purity, the very folds of the drapery suggest chasteness. Thou hast a white soul, Rudolph, or thou could never have designed that."

Rudolph turned abruptly away, crossed the room, and returned with another model, which he placed beside the first.

"What do you think of this?" he asked, hoarsely, while his eyes, full of passionate questioning, sought Frankinstein's face.

The latter, with his head on one side, looked critically at the model.

"Ah! 'tis Carl's, I suppose," he said. "It is good, much like yours in some respects, but falling far short indeed. It has no chance to win the commission."

A swift pallor swept Rudolph's face. His eyes rested gloomily upon the two models.

"I stopped in to tell you," continued Frankinstein, "that the models must be sent to the committee not later than to-morrow. A sealed envelope, containing the name of the sculptor, must accompany each model. These will not be opened until the decision is made, so you see the name or fame of the sculptor will bear no weight. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand," replied Rudolph, dully.

Frankinstein grasped his hand and shook it vigorously. There were tears in the little man's eyes.

"I am proud of thee, Rudolph," he said. "Proud that thou wert my pupil."

A little while later Carl returned, to find Rudolph pacing up and down the room, his face pale and drawn.

"You have come at last, Carl," he said. "I have news for you that will make you very glad. Mr. Frankinstein has been here, and he went wild with delight over your model. He says it will win the commission, and the master is not likely to err in his judgment."

Carl's eyes rested quietly upon Rudolph's face. His own showed no delight, no exultation.

"So?" he said, gravely. "Well, we shall see. I must leave you early to-morrow morning, Rudolph," he added. "I am summoned home. An uncle has died and left me a small competence. I go to look after it."

"Accept my regard, Carl," said Rudolph, wearily. "The Goddess of Fortune smiles upon you at last. But you will return to make the statue?"

Carl smiled.

"You seem so sure that I will win, Rudolph," he said. "I am not so positive. If such should be the case, however, I will return to town. You will make known to me the result."

As he caught sight of the model he raised both hands, with a rapturous exclamation.

As soon as Carl returned home, and heard that the commission had been awarded to Rudolph, he hastened to congratulate him, but was shocked by the revelation which his chum made him.

"Carl!" cried Rudolph, "I have a confession to make. When I realized your model was superior to mine I felt I should go mad with despair. In the night I changed those envelopes, thereby permitting Mr. Frankinstein to believe your model was the one wrought by myself. But it appears after all Frankinstein and myself were wrong in our judgment, for it was my model which the committee accepted. Do you understand, Carl?"

"There was no mistake," Carl's voice rang out, clear, cold and stern. "Listen to me, Rudolph. While you were planning treachery against me, I was pondering how I could turn matters for your interest and welfare. I knew that my model was superior to yours, and I was sorry, for I wanted you to win the commission. I loved you better than myself. I could not sleep for thinking of it, and about daylight it occurred to me to change the envelopes. I first wrote you a letter, entreating you to accept the commission should my model win—that for you to acquire fame and fortune would afford me more happiness than to have both myself. This letter I placed so that you would receive it as soon as the result of the competition was made known. After I had written the letter I went into the studio and changed the envelopes upon the models."

A low moan broke from Rudolph's lips. He sank down into a chair and hid his face in his arms.

"I have loved you well, Rudolph," continued Carl, "loved you even better than myself, and I would have forgiven you anything save treachery. Even had you come and made this confession to me through remorse and repentance I might still have forgiven. But, you confessed your treachery only that you might escape its consequences, and still reap the harvest which you imagined your guilty hand had put from you."

Rudolph lifted his head and stared helplessly up into Carl's fair face.

"What—what will you do?" he asked.

"I shall claim my rights. The explanation of the mistake I leave to you. I shall not contradict whatever explanation you may see fit to offer. The twenty thousand dollars shall be yours."

"And—then?" murmured Rudolph, and into his eyes flashed the old tenderness.

"And then," Carl replied, "you and I will be strangers—forever,"

And Rudolph bowed his dark head, for at that moment neither fame nor riches seemed as sweet as the friendship he had forfeited.

No. 7 RUE FERON

FROM THE DIARY OF A FRENCH DETECTIVE

"M. LE COMMISSAIRE, may I speak with you?"

It was on the first of January that a man burst into the presence of the Commissaire of Police, Jules Minteaux, in Paris.

"May I speak to you, monsieur?" repeated the man.

"Who are you? What do you want?" said the commissaire, curtly.

"My wife—Mme. Purvois—has committed suicide. She is dead, monsieur. I live in the Rue Feron, No. 7."

"Suicide—when?"

"Some time during the night, monsieur," answered the man, nervously. "Last night, when I came home from looking for work, she was alive and in her usual spirits. She always had a smile for me, poor as I am, and even though we hadn't a sou in the house——"

"Well?" broke in the commissaire, abruptly.

"We were very hungry, both of us, but I cheered her by the good news that I had obtained the promise of work at my trade, and we went to bed supperless, thinking of what good things we would have when I earned my first five francs. An hour ago I awoke. I spoke to her, and, Mon Dieu! she was dead. She was not lying beside me on our pallet, but on the floor, monsieur. Oh, monsieur, she was a horrible sight!"

"Umph!" said the official; "she must have been a woman of rare nerve to kill herself, and you a sound sleeper not to have been awakened by the fall."

"I was tired from walking the streets, monsieur, and slept heavier than usual. The tired and hungry always sleep sound. They are like the dead, for they do not dream."

"I will be at the Rue Feron, No. 7, directly," said the commissaire, briefly.

The man, who had given his name as Ambrose Purvois, put his ragged cap over his tangled mass of hair and went out. Following him, at a signal from the commissaire, was a mouchard in plain clothes.

"Do not let him get beyond your reach," whispered the commissaire. Within the half hour the commissaire, with two or three of his officials, a surgeon of police, and myself, entered the dingy Rue Feron. To reach the abode of Purvois, we had to pass through a court—a blind passage—and up three flights of narrow, wooden stairs. Entering the apartment, or, rather, narrow room, we beheld the victim lying in the middle of the floor, stark and cold, the glassy eyes wide open, and one of her hands clutching the handle of a knife.

On the pallet sat the husband, with his hands over his face, moaning as if afflicted with the most inconsolable grief. One of the officials bade him stand up. He did so. The commissaire questioned him sharply, while the surgeon made his customary examination of the body.

"Where were you married to this woman?"

"In Marseilles, monsieur."

"What was her maiden name?"

"Lisette Camereau. She was an orphan."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Only six months, monsieur—we have existed, not lived. To live is to enjoy one's self and be happy. Poor, poor girl! she was so kind of heart."

"There, that will do now," said the official. The surgeon had made his inspection of the body; the other officials had examined the room, and had in their brief, quick, and yet thorough manner questioned the neighbors in the group of scared people in the narrow passage-way anxious to get a sight of this new horror of the Rue Feron.

"It may be suicide," said the commissaire.

"The wound has the appearance of being inflicted by a nervous hand," added the surgeon.

From the time I had entered the room I had remained a silent spectator of the scene. Only once had I turned my eyes towards the bereaved husband, Ambrose Purvois. During his conversation with the commissaire, I watched intently every change of his dark, forbidding countenance. As the surgeon ceased speaking, I stepped forward and examined closely the woman's hands—the one which was closed about the knife handle, and the other, which lay stiffened beside her. I made no remark, however, as I arose from my stooping position.

The body was removed to the morgue, the official inquest was made, and the report of the decision sent to the lieutenant-general of police. It was that "There was no evidence to show that the woman, Lisette Purvois, had died other than by her own hand, and that she had probably committed the act through temporary insanity, caused by hunger." That was the return in brief.

But I, in my own mind, dissented from the opinion. As yet in my first year upon the force—in fact, the supposed suicide of Mme. Purvois occurred but a few months after the lucky termination of the Leflamme case—I was ambitious to distinguish myself. I thought I saw a mystery

in this affair, and an opportunity to win the envy of my comrades; and the theory I had already formed in my mind I determined to verify.

But despite my watchfulness, Ambrose Purvois, the husband of the dead woman, disappeared from the Rue Feron; and a little later I was sent with two of my comrades upon a secret mission to Toulon. Months passed, but though I had made no discoveries, I had not forgotten the suicide of Mme. Purvois.

In the latter part of the year there appeared in Paris the Count Horace Croissart, accompanied by a handsome woman, who was, he acknowledged, the countess, his wife. They rented a magnificently furnished hotel in the Rue des Martyrs, and very speedily made themselves known in society.

The count donated largely to charity; his equipage was among the finest to be seen in the public drives, his establishment luxurious in its appointments. One day his valet was missing—had, in fact, run away—and the count was necessarily obliged to engage a new one, who was recommended as being in every way proper. He presented certificates from two or three of his former employers, all of whom were in the best society. He was, as the count himself enthusiastically expressed it, a gem of a fellow, ready, expert in his duties, sharp-eyed, and seemed to anticipate every want of his master. As I am not penning a romance, let me inform you at once that this valet was myself.

My term of service as the count's valet had extended into the third month, when, in the month of April, I appeared before the lieutenant-general of police, and, sending in my name, was immediately received by the official alone.

"Monseigneur," I said, "the time has come. The drama is in its last act."

The lieutenant smiled.

"You began your part," said the lieutenant, "in January in the Rué Feron. You have been playing three years. Have you succeeded in making your share in the work interesting?"

"Monseigneur," I rejoined, "I have concluded my work, and now have to inform you that the Count Horace Croissart is but another name for Ambrose Purvois, and that Ambrose Purvois murdered his wife, Lisette Purvois, in the Rue Feron, and concocted, adroit villain that he is, the story of her having killed herself."

"When I accompanied the commissaire to the Rue Feron," I answered, "and saw the woman, I said to myself, 'Here is a chance for you, Pierre Chassac, to earn a name for yourself.' I examined the body after the surgeon. I examined the woman's hands. What I noted I kept to myself.

"I kept my own counsel. I watched this Purvois; I inquired into his habits and his ways of life. I discovered nothing of any consequence save that he and the woman lived happily together; and from the postman I learned that in the week of the murder he had left a letter, bearing the post-mark of Marseilles, and directed to Lisette Purvois. Now, had the contents of that letter anything to do with the murder? Who received the letter? Not the woman, but her husband. I was sent on a mission to Toulon. When I returned I could recover no trace of Ambrose Purvois, who had disappeared previous to my departure. It was then that I came first to you.

"Then one day I saw this Count Horace Croissart. Despite the change in his appearance, I recognized in him my missing Ambrose Purvois. I followed him, became acquainted after a month or two with his valet, induced the valet to leave him for a better place, which I secured him in the family of the Baron Montgiron, and, by a ruse, and the trick of false letters, I obtained his position with the count. I found that the countess, despite her fine arts, was not of high birth; in fact, that she was nothing but his mistress, and that there was a secret between them.

"One day I happened to enter a room adjoining that in which they were conversing. I heard loud words. Slipping into a closet between the two rooms, through the thin partition I heard her say: 'I have been your tool long enough. I believe it was you who killed my sister. Give me what I want—one-half—and let us separate. We can no longer live together.'

"When that conversation was ended, I knew that I had the count, alias Ambrose Purvois. The whole thing was plain to me. This woman, the countess, was the sister of Purvois' wife. This sister, living in Marseilles, had written to Lisette, telling her that, by the death of an uncle, the two sisters were heiresses of a fortune of 300,000 francs; that this wretch, Purvois, had suddenly resolved to rid himself of the sister, who was his wife, and thereby leap at once into her share of the fortune by his claim as her husband. He murdered her, then made his way to Marseilles, presented himself to the sister, who was younger and handsomer than the dead one, and finally won her affection, and came to Paris, assumed the title of Count Horace Croissart, and went in for enjoyment. You remember, at the inquest, he said: 'I have existed, not lived; to live, one must enjoy one's self.'

"So much have I discovered, monseigneur," I concluded. "They are about to separate. Shall we end the play now?"

"Your part is ended; mine now begins," said the lieutenant-general.

That evening Count Horace Croissart, alias Ambrose Purvois, was arrested in his box at the Grand Opera, and taken to the police headquarters. The countess was also arrested. On being informed of the charge against them, the bogus count lost all courage; and when I took the stand, and briefly recited the facts already recorded, he grew livid with fear, and, abject coward that he was, confessed, and begged for mercy.

The sister of the murdered woman was released, and Ambrose Purvois was executed.

THE CROYDEN CASE

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER III.

THE FORGERY.

AS William Rupel stood by the side of the bed looking at his mother, who was now wrapped in a peaceful slumber, he could not help but admire the beautiful face that was before him. Even in her old age some of her former beauty remained.

"Mother, thou knowest little of what this revelation is going to cost me. I have almost lost all respect for myself, and I curse the day that I was born. It is always so if one struggles to become famous—some great object always stands in the way, and often the only way to remove such an impediment is by committing a crime. Perhaps such a crime as I am about to commit— I will not disturb her; I will go to the village church and look over the register and see what I can do."

So saying, he left the room, and, after he had put on his hat and overcoat, he went back to the village church and there asked to see the register. Page after page he turned over until he came to the year that he was born in. This register had not been opened for years. The old minister was dead, and, if he could succeed in imitating the handwriting, there would be no evidence of his crime. He turned to the day of the month on which he was born, and, as he looked down the page, an exclamation of surprise came from his lips as he read:

"Born this day, at Croyden Abbey, William, son of Sir Robert Rupel and Margaret, his wife."

"Do my eyes deceive me?" cried William Rupel as he read the entry again and examined the page closely. The entry was at the bottom of the page, and it seemed as if the writer had been compelled to reduce his penmanship on the last line to get it all in. The writing was the same as the rest on the page, yet the ink was of a little darker color in some places. The entry had been made years before, it was evident.

"Thank heavens, one task is spared me," muttered Rupel, as he gazed on the page. Then, suddenly, a thought occurred to him, and he said with a tremor in his voice:

"Can it be that my father made this entry? Now that I look at it critically the writing seems to be the same as the rest, still there is one characteristic feature of my father's handwriting which the casual observer would not notice in this entry, and that is the R——. He has done this, and I thank him for it. Oh, I almost forgot the entry of a marriage," he exclaimed, as he was about to close the volume and to put it back on the shelf. This was more difficult to find. Page after page he scanned until he came to the first page of the volume which commenced that year. No entry was there. Not discouraged yet he took down another volume and examined that. He came to a page with only one entry on it. In this there was no attempt to disguise the handwriting. It was that of the old curate of Croyden Abbey, who had died, and whose place Mr. Hoffman now filled. The ink here was heavy and black, and the entry read as follows:

"In the absence of the minister of the parish, I have this day united in the bonds of matrimony Sir Robert Rupel of Croyden Abbey and Margaret Babbington of the Village of Croyden."

"So the old curate was as deep in the mire as my father," William Rupel said, when he had finished reading the entry. "It is a good thing that he is dead and not able to tell the tale. I have nothing to fear now if I can only procure a marriage certificate. There is something that I never thought of until now. I wonder if they have made any entry of Madge Babbington's death? If they have not, I will have to provide for this and get a certificate of burial."

This was not so difficult to find, for a few days after the entry of his birth William Rupel found the entry of his mother's death. This was also made in the handwriting of the curate of Croyden Abbey.

"This has been cleverly done," he thought, after he had placed the books back on the shelf where they belonged, and prepared to go back to the hall. He did not notice that any one had entered the vestry as he was putting the books away, and as he was about to leave the room by a side-door some one hailed him. He turned around and discovered his step-brother, Clarence, standing in the center of the apartment. A number of thoughts rushed into his mind at once, and when he encountered Clarence's searching look he seemed somewhat confused.

"What were you examining the records for?" asked Clarence, with a sneer. "Are you afraid you won't get the estates, William, and you want to fix up the registers?"

At this Rupel's face turned pale, and for a few

minutes he did not give any reply. At last he said:

"Clarence, you wrong me. You know that if the estates were not legally mine I would not keep them one hour."

"Oh, yes," retorted Clarence, "that is what all prating hypocrites declare."

"Take care, Clarence, what you say," cried William, as he clinched his hands and made a step towards his step-brother. "Remember who you are speaking to, and that I have it in my power to make you respect me."

"What would you do, you—?" cried Clarence, with an oath, and his face wearing a black and threatening look. He inherited his father's ugly temper, and he was now perfectly wild with rage. He did not wait for his step-brother to give any reply, but he jumped forward and gave William a furious blow in the face. He found out his mistake in a few minutes, when William returned the blow with a stinging left-hander, which sent Clarence flying to the other end of the room, where he fell to the floor in a heap.

"Get up!" ordered William; as he came forward and took hold of Clarence's arm, assisting him to his feet. "Let this be a lesson to you in future, Clarence. Remember that I am master of Croyden Abbey now, and I will not put up with any more insults from you or your mother, as I did when my father was alive."

As he looked down upon the page an exclamation came from his lips.

"You can't crow over me until the will is found; you don't know what that may contain."

"That will be found in a very short time, as soon as the papers have been properly looked over," answered William, in a manner that was now very cool and collected.

"William, I hate you! I don't believe that you are the heir to the Croyden estates. I don't believe that your mother was ever married to my father."

"Could he know anything?" thought William, and then he answered Clarence:

"You don't know what you are saying, Clarence. I am a legitimate child, the same as you are, and the records can prove it."

"I don't believe the records. Entries can be forged as well as wills and other documents."

This retort made William start, but he retained his composure and replied:

"Clarence, if you don't keep quiet and not make such outlandish statements I will be compelled to make you."

"You, nor no one else, can do that. Take that——"

"Hold, Clarence Rupe!" exclaimed a voice, and before he had time to strike his step-brother, Mr. Hoffman grasped his arm and shook him violently. The curate looked at William's face and saw that it retained the marks of the first blow, and he demanded, in a severe voice:

"What is the meaning of this disturbance? If any one should hear of this there would be a great scandal."

"He's a usurper," cried Clarence, as he tried to

jerk his arm away from the curate, but he found that his efforts were useless, as the grip was too strong.

William explained to his friend the whole matter relating to the meeting between his step-brother and himself, and ended by saying:

"If Clarence doesn't behave himself as a gentleman should, I shall be compelled to send him away from England, for it will not do for me to run the risk of having my reputation spoiled by the indiscreet actions of such as he."

Mr. Hoffman now spoke to Clarence long and earnestly, but it seemed as if his words were thrown away, for when they left the church together, closely followed by William, he ground his teeth in rage, and when he left Mr. Hoffman at the corner of one of the streets in the village, he muttered, as he looked after the retiring figures of his step-brother and the curate:

"Curse you both. I hate you, and I will yet be revenged on William."

He hurried along until he came to a cottage at the outskirts of the town. He stopped before this, took a key from his pocket and entered. Before he closed the door a young woman came running up to him, threw her arms around his neck, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Clarence, I am so glad that you have come!"

William Rupel and the curate returned to the hall, and then they went to Madge Babbington's room together. Here, after a short consultation with the sick woman, Mr. Hoffman left her alone with William. Madge had told the curate, as well as all others except her son, that her name was Margaret Fuller. When mother and son were alone together, William told Madge all about the records at the church, and ended by saying:

"Mother, now all that I desire is a marriage certificate and a will."

"Since they were cautious enough to fix the records," answered the mother, "they may have provided a certificate of marriage also. Last night, in the study, I was fortunate in being able to carry off with me a bundle of papers belonging to your father. Here they are; look them through and see what they contain."

She handed the papers to her son. He took them, and with trembling hands commenced to untie the string which bound them together. After looking through nearly all of them, he at last picked up two that were yellow with age. One of them proved to be a marriage certificate, signed by the old curate, the other an old will that had not been signed.

This document willed all the property and the title belonging to Sir Robert Rupel to his son William. In it there was no word said about Clarence or his mother, and it is reasonable to suppose that it must have been written before Clarence was born.

When William Rupel finished reading, he said to his mother:

"All this will needs is a signature, and I think that I can provide that."

"How will you make the ink appear the same as that in the body of the document?"

"I can fix that easily enough."

He then locked the door of the room and took a seat at the table, where there was an inkstand and pens. He next took some ink from the bottle and poured it into a saucer, diluting the fluid with water. He wrote his father's name several times on some waste paper, and then he dried the ink over the fire and compared the color with that in the will.

"It is the same color exactly," he exclaimed, triumphantly. "Now for the signature."

Again he practiced several times on the waste paper, and then wrote the signature at the bottom of the will. When the ink was dry he folded the papers together and handed them back to his mother, saying:

"There, mother, you can keep them until some inquiry is made, and then you can give the papers up and explain how they came into your possession."

"I will do my best for you, William, and I hope that I will live long enough to see your plans successfully carried out. May Heaven bless you, my son. Don't look so depressed; you have committed no crime."

"I'm a forger," murmured William, as he stood by his mother's bedside with bowed head.

"Don't think any more of that, William; you are justified in doing what you have done. Kiss me, and say that you forgive your mother for all the harm that she has done you."

William bent over the sick woman, and kissed her. His mother clasped her frail arms around his neck, and cried piteously for some time. She then kissed him several times, and released him. As he was about to leave the room she called him and said, as she took the locket and chain from her neck:

"William, take this, and wear it next to your heart, and when I am dead and gone, and you look at it, think kindly of your poor mother."

"I will do it, mother," he answered, as he took the locket and chain and placed it safely in his vest-pocket. He left the room and went downstairs, with the intention of seeing his step-mother and talking with her about the actions of her son.

He knew when he went into the parlor that he would not be able to convince Lady Anne that Clarence was in the wrong, but he determined to let her know about the quarrel, and to tell her that unless his step-brother reformed, he would be compelled to send him away. He was surprised when he walked into the room to find that Mr. Hoffman was sitting by his step-mother's side, and that the curate had already told her about the fracas in the vestry-room of the church.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

MANILA SHORT OF COINS

There is a shortage of coins throughout the Philippine Islands. The Philippine National Bank is issuing paper bills of the denomination of 10 and 20 centavos as a temporary relief.

SMALL FORTUNE IN DYE

A barrel of German red dye, hidden away in a stockroom of a paper company at Lincoln, N. H., since it was purchased three years ago for $89, has just been sold to a New York concern for $5,000. The paper plant recently was sold, and the new owners found the dye and put it on the market.

PUTS TRADE-MARK ON APPLES

"Here y' are—your monogram on an apple!" It's the latest wrinkle. S. O. Butler, fruit grower of Helmer, Ind., has a method of putting initials, pictures of horses, cows and most anything on apples. After the fruit has become full-grown but is still green, a stencil is placed on the surface, and the leaves pulled away to allow the sunlight to color the skin.

WOMEN WORKERS IN OVERALLS

Sixty young women employed on light mechanical work in the Otis Elevator Company's big plant in Yonkers, N. Y., it was announced a few days ago, have just donned overalls. They are working on munitions in the place of men who have joined the army. The "womanalls," as they have been named, have been adopted as a matter of safety for working around machinery.

OVERLOOKED $1,729 FOR YEARS

E. G. Coursen, forty-seven years of age, a Scranton, Pa., grocer, is an honest man. While looking through a lot of old papers the other day, Peter Eichelberger, of Portland, found a check for $1,729, given him nineteen years ago by Coursen, and which had been overlooked. Eichelberger, knowing that the check was outlawed, mailed it to Coursen, and shortly received another check.

PROFIT ON SHEEP

A clear profit of $20 a head from a flock of 275 ewes, with the wool-clip averaging eight pounds and an increase in numbers of 168 per cent., is the cheerful outlook reported by a Bayfield County sheep-raiser. This flockmaster of Wisconsin expects to market 85 ram lambs averaging from 90 to 95 pounds each next fall. Each of the 275 ewes carried on the farm will produce an average of more than $30 a head this year, represented by her wool-clip and the sale of her lambs for mutton.

FRANCE TO DEMONETIZE COINS

The French government has decided to demonetize certain types of silver coins, says the *Matin*, to put a stop to the hoarding which is paralyzing trade. When 15,000,000 nickel coins were struck by the mint, all vanished virtually as soon as issued.

The hoarding craze is especially prevalent in the provinces. To force out the hidden money, Finance Minister Klotz plans to demonetize all silver coins bearing the effigy of Napoleon. He issued a circular announcing the government's intention, pointing out that the intrinsic value of the coin is only 67 per cent. of its nominal value.

AFRICAN CHIEF'S SON A STUDENT

Geegbey Duwellyquiton Waikby is a freshman at Ohio Wesleyan University. He hails from Krooton, Monrovia, Liberia, and is the son of a full-fledged African chieftain. He has been in this country since 1913, and has become thoroughly Americanized.

He was a student at the missionary school of Miss Mary Charpe, in Africa, when his abilities as a student attracted the attention of Bishop Burt. The bishop took a friendly interest in him and was responsible for his coming to America.

The bishop, realizing the handicap of his native name, gave the boy his name, and he registered at the university as William Burt Greegbey.

BRITON FLIES 2,000 MILES TO BOMB CONSTANTINOPLE

The Admiralty announces that a successful air attack in the vicinity of Constantinople has been fully accomplished by a large British bombing airplane, which flew from England to a British base in the Mediterranean in a series of eight flights. The stopping-places included Lyons and Rome, and the total distance covered was nearly 2,000 miles.

The machine was actually in the air thirty-one hours. During some parts of the flight strong winds and heavy rainstorms were experienced, and there was one stretch of 200 miles over a mountainous country where it would be impossible to land.

GIRL GOVERNMENT MESSENGERS

The Civil Service Commission authorizes the following:

Due to the insufficient number of male messengers in the government departments, the Civil Service Commission held a competitive examination for female applicants for messenger service in the departments. This examination was held on October 19, 1917, and out of the 120 that took it, 97 qualified. The commission has already certified 70 of these, and the innovation apparently has proven a success.

$74,000 STOLEN IN MAIL

With the recovery of a stolen mail-pouch, from which $28,000 in bonds had been taken, it became known that Federal authorities were investigating the disappearance of a second pouch, containing $46,000 in securities.

In each case the mail-bag disappeared after it had been thrown upon a truck for transshipment. The bag recovered the other day was found by accident when an employee of the Portland Terminal Machine Shops stumbled over it in the underbrush near the Union Station, Portland, Me.

SHE STAYED AT HOME

Mrs. Sarah J. Seagraves, of Winchester, Ind., who has just celebrated her ninety-third birthday, has lived in Winchester since 1850, and since 1867 has not been in the business district of the town until the other day, when her grandson took her in an automobile for a ride about the city.

She lives in the northwest part of the city, and has not crossed either of the railroads through town for more than thirty-five years.

Until two years ago she cultivated her garden, and until recently she did her own housework.

She has expressed a desire to take more rides in the gasoline wagon, as she called the automobile, and to attend a moving picture show. Mrs. Seagraves' mother died at the age of 106.

ROBBED TO BUY A MONKEY

After robbing an apartment to get money enough to buy a monkey, Frank Brennan, fifteen years old, of 213 Fifty-first street, and Martin O'Connor, seventeen, of 304 Forty-seventh street, Brooklyn, N. Y., had to sell the animal because their mothers would not allow it around. Then they got arrested as burglars, according to testimony in the Brooklyn Children's Court, before Justice Mayo.

Detectives Blank and Smith arrested the boys after O'Connor had been identified by Timothy Horrigan as one of the lads who looted his apartment on November 9 and took $45 in money and two rings valued at $15. O'Connor pleaded guilty before County Judge Hylan. He said he and Brennan bought a monkey for $25, which they later sold for $4.50 because no one would give it shelter.

STONECUTTER'S ERROR MAKES A MAN'S AGE 969 YEARS.

In a burial ground in Germantown there is a tombstone which gives the age of him who lies beneath it, one John Adam, as 969 years.

The records, I believe, show that his age was rightly sixty-nine, and the explanation given is that the stonecutter cut his 9 first and then found he had no room for the 6. So he filled in the 9 with cement and cut behind his first markings.

Time, having worn out the cement, reveals the tomb of an ancient fit to be classed with those mentioned in Genesis.

WHY DOES A GLOW-WORM GLOW?

A glow-worm is a kind of beetle which may be found in the yards and hedges in the summer time. The name applies only to the female of the species which is wingless and whose body resembles that of a caterpillar somewhat and emits a shining green light from the end of the abdomen, says the Book of Wonders. The male of this species has wings but does not show any light as does the female and resembles an ordinary beetle. The male flies about in the evening looking for the female and she makes her light glow in order that the male may find her. Glow-worms are found mostly in England. There are, however, some members of the same species of beetle common to the United States. We speak of them as fireflies or lightning bugs. The female of these also is the only one to carry a light, although, unlike the glow-worm, she has wings and can fly.

TREASURE HUNTERS.

The search for treasure, started by Vol Kelly of Clarksville, Ind., many years ago, is said to have been renewed, as numerous holes have been dug along Nagle's creek, in the vicinity in which Kelly used to search.

The identity of the new seekers is not known, as the digging has been done at night. Kelly believed treasure was hidden because of an ancient record concerning De Soto. The tale is that his treasurer, Fernandez, deserted him, taking the money chest, and that this was buried not far from the falls of the Ohio, when he was attacked by Indians. Kelly used a divining rod which was supposed to dip at the presence of gold.

Another old legend is that a Spanish knight appeared, clad in black with helmet and armor, and danced a fantastic dance in the moonlight, the theory of the superstitious being that it was Fernandez, who gloated over the failure of those who sought to find the gold. Treasures, revealing or suggesting long-forgotten or unknown history, are not uncommon here. Bodies, skulls and weapons are among the things found, sometimes near the surface. A few years ago, Albert Hume discovered what were supposed to be bodies of chiefs, their heads surrounded with beautifully worked spear points.

BUILDS A "CRAZY PATCH" HOUSE.

The "crazy patch" house of David F. Brown, in Punxsutawney, Pa., is composed of stones from all parts of the world, says the Popular Science Monthly. There are stones from every State in the United States, stones from Italy, Ireland, China, Japan, South America and other places innumerable. Grindstones, millstones, stones, from the Mammoth Cave, from Pike's Peak, from the home of Patrick Henry, from the spot on which General Lee surrendered and from every historically famous place in this country, go to make up the "crazy patch" house. Over the fireplace is a piece of gold quartz from South America. It required two years to build the house.

FAUCET SPROUTS ON OAK.

One of the first things which attracts the attention of the tourist as he alights from the car at Alpine Tavern, Mount Lowe, Cal., is a drinking fountain, whose source of supply appears to come from the heart of an oak tree, says the American Boy. About twenty years ago there was a large cavity in this tree, extending up about 3 1-2 feet from the ground. A hole was bored through to this cavity and a water pipe was connected.

Since modern tree surgery has come into practice, tree doctors have filled the cavity and the bark has grown over the filling, and the tree is still alive and in a thrifty condition. Every visitor makes it a point to have a drink of the pure mountain water issuing from the heart of a sturdy oak.

CHURCH OF PAVING STONES.

The remaining $750 of a debt incurred by the Winstanley Baptist Church, East St. Louis, Ill., when it built an edifice out of discarded paving stones three years ago has been paid.

The Rev. E. W. Reeder was going to St. Louis on a street car when he saw laborers tearing the paving stones out of Broadway in this city.

He had desired for some time to build a new church, but money was lacking. He conceived the idea of using the discarded stone. They were bought from the city for a small sum.

The new church was built by members of its congregation and Mr. Reeder. The latter donned overalls and directed the work. It required eight months to complete the structure. The site and the building cost a total of $8,000.

DOG ADOPTS COYOTES.

Four coyote pups have been adopted by a mother dog on the ranch of Arthur Pefley, north of Santa Ana, Cal.

The coyotes were found in the foothills back of El Modena by Virgil Pritchard, a high school boy, whose dogs fought off the mother coyote while Virgil got away with the little coyotes. Clarence Pefley had a dog with two puppies.

The four strangers were put on the ground near the mother dog and the puppies, who were busily engaged in partaking of a meal. Rather bewildered, the coyotes crept to the mother dog. The dog eyed the coyotes, then, when they approached, she began licking them, and soon the coyotes were just as busily engaged in eating as were their cousins.

WHY DO BARBER-POLES HAVE STRIPES?

In early years the barber not only cut hair and shaved people, but he was also a surgeon. He was a surgeon to the extent that he bled people. In early times our knowledge of surgery was practically limited to blood-letting. A great many ailments were attributed to too much blood in the body, and when anything got wrong with a man or woman, the first thing they thought of was to reduce the amount of blood in the body by taking some of it out, says the Book of Wonders.

The town barber was the man who did this for people and his pole represented the sign of his business.

The round ball at the top, which was generally gilded, represents the barbering end of the business. It stood for the brass basin in which the barber used to prepare lather for shaving customers.

The pole itself represents the staff which people who were having blood taken out of their bodies held during the operation. The two spiral ribbons, one red and one white, which are painted spirally on the pole, represented the bandages. The white one stood for the bandage which was put on before the blood was taken out and the red one the bandage which was used for binding up the wound when the operation was completed.

MAROONED TWO YEARS ON ISLE.

The Navy Department has made public the report of the American warship commander who rescued from Clippertown Island, in the Pacific, some time ago, three women and eight children who were the last remnants of a party of Mexicans who went to the island with Captain Ramon De Arnaud of the Mexican army to develop its guano deposit.

For military reasons the names of the American vessel and its commander were not made public. The commander's report shows that the women and children who were rescued had barely escaped starvation, while Captain De Arnaud lost his life at sea in the small boat in which he started out for help, and that other members of the party died of starvation and scurvy.

It was not until after the number of women and children left alive on the island had been reduced to the limits of the small supply of cocoanuts that the ravages of scurvy ceased. For more than two years these survivors were forced to subsist on the fresh eggs of gannets and gulls, and occasionally fish.

The officers and crew of the warship raised a fund of $200 for the relief of the refugees, who have been landed at a Mexican port.

FISH HAD FOUR FEET.

While fishing in the Iowa River Raymond Peterson caught a strange thing. Local scientists have pronounced it a "hicoperotibygoshaway," but some of our best posted Nimrods say it is a mud puppy. Anyway, it was a strange looking critter with a body shaped like an eel. It was 24 1-2 inches long. It had a head like a fish with the exception that instead of gills it had a collar of fur just back of the head. It had four legs and in some respects resembled a baby alligator. The little animal put up a pretty game fight for a while, but it soon died when exposed to the air. It will be sent to a New York museum.

GASOLINE BURIED 20 YEARS.

Workmen making excavations at the Normal School, Sparta, Wis., came across a 1,000-gallon tank of gasoline. How and when and why it was buried was a mystery at first, but later some old-timers remembered that a score or more of years ago the institution used gasoline, and that it was purchased in large quantities at a low price. As a safety-first measure the tank was buried to guard against explosions. It is presumed that this particular tank was buried, and through a change in administration or in some other way the location of its grave was forgotten.

BUTTER SPREAD ON SAND.

A new form of confidence game has been practised with success in Chicago during the last few days. Several storekeepers and hospitals have reported to the police that they have purchased from agents tubs purporting to contain 60 pounds of butter, but have found, when cutting into the tubs, that the butter extended but one or two inches from the surface and that the rest of their purchase was sand. The tubs were sold for as high as $19.50, making the price of the butter in the neighborhood of $4 a pound.

MONEY MACHINE FAILS.

Isaac Deutsch and Myer Katz, of West Frankfort, Ill., are facing trial on a charge of operating a confidence game brought by Anton Sorchych, of Depue, Ill., who claims Deutsch and Katz sold him a machine to make $20 bills, he paying them $5,000 for the outfit.

According to Sorchych, the machine was to be operated by placing a $20 bill in an aperture and turning a crank. Scores of duplicate certificates came forth. Three thousand were "made" in two weeks. Armed with a shotgun, he is said to have guarded his machine for three days after the men left. He then discovered the device would not work without more bills and brought suit.

A PROPHECY OF FLYING OF 200 YEARS AGO.

Inasmuch as the words were uttered more than two centuries ago, there was a truly prophetic anticipation of the experience of the present war in a sermon on "physio-theology," delivered in 1711 by Doctor William Delham, of St. John's College, Oxford, which has just come to light again. "As in all probability the art of flying would particularly be," he said, "by putting it in man's power to discover the secret of nations and families more than is consistent with the peace of the world to know; by giving ill men greater opportunities to do mischief, which it would not lie in the power of others to prevent; and, as one observes, by making men less sociable."

A REMARKABLE OPERATION.

Removing an open safety-pin which was swallowed by a seven-months-old baby with the sole aid of X-Rays and a snare, was the remarkable operation recently performed by Dr. G. S. Otrich of Belleville, Ill.

When an X-ray photograph was taken of the child, says Popular Science, it was desicovered that the open pin was lodged in the esophagus, with the point sticking upwards towards the child's mouth. The X-ray tube was arranged beneath an ordinary table, so as to throw the light upward, and the child placed so that the light from the tube would be in a direct line. A fluroscope was adjusted directly over the child, and the obstruction became clearly visible. The doctor passed a small snare into the esophagus, and with infinite care passed it slightly beyond the pin. After withdrawing it until the pin seemed to be engaged, he closed the snare. On the first attempt the pin was closed and withdrawn.

SUPERSTITIOUS BARBARISM.

Barbarous methods of treating sick animals, as practised in certain parts of this country, are described as follows by a writer in *Farm and Fireside:*

"Numerous cows in our neighborhood have had holes bored in their horns and turpentine poured in. They have had their tails split and salt and pepper inserted, when all the poor beasts needed was to have the vacancy in their stomachs filled with nourishing food. A neighbor who lately lost a mule from blind staggers used, among other crude remedies, turpentine poured directly into the ears. Hog diseases frequently appear in our community, and every sick hog is supposed to have the cholera. Some people pour coal oil into their hogs' ears as a remedy for cholera, but I cannot see where the good comes from irritating the delicate membranes inside the head when the trouble lies in another part of the body.

"Then when chickens begin to die suddenly cholera is again credited, and among the remedies employed by some people to stamp out the disease is to burn a sick chicken alive.

"Considerable mental effort is needed to realize that here, in a supposedly enlightened land, filled with schools, churches and charitable organizations, to-day, in 1917, such barbarism persists."

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